United Nations A/57/PV.51

General Assembly
Fifty-seventh session

Official Records

51st plenary meeting
Friday, 15 November 2002, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kavan ..... (Czech Republic)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 28

Assistance in mine action

Report of the Secretary-General (A/57/430)

Mr. Mustafa (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me pleasure, as we meet today to examine agenda item 28 regarding assistance in mine action, to express, on behalf of the Sudan, our deep gratitude and appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (A/57/430) on the subject and for his invaluable efforts in ensuring the implementation of the six strategic goals contained in the United Nations Mine Action Strategy for 2001-2005.

I would also like to thank, in particular, all assessment missions and field missions dispatched to mine-affected countries, as well as all international, regional and national agencies, organizations and programmes operating in this field.

Because it recognizes the great risks that mines pose, especially to civilians, the Sudan was one of the first countries to sign the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction. As the Assembly is aware, my country is among those that face the risks related to mines; that is why we strongly support all international and regional efforts aimed at eliminating such risks.

In that context, we pay tribute to the efforts undertaken in this sphere since the entry into force of the Convention in March 1999 and the ensuing multilateral action, represented in the decisions and recommendations made at the Third Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention, held at Managua. Over the past three years, those efforts have led to a relative decrease in the production, stockpiling and use of landmines and supplement the United Nations effort to provide assistance in mine action. Here, cooperation has begun with two of our national agencies — the Humanitarian Assistance Agency and the Corps of Engineers — to build a national centre for mine action in the Sudan, where a database would be established and surveys undertaken to map out locations affected by mines in the Sudan.

In addition, many international and national organizations have participated in a European Union project to assist in mine action in the Sudan. That project has begun to train local personnel in the safe removal of landmines. Moreover, we appreciate the efforts of UNICEF, in coordination with national institutions, to raise the population's awareness of mine risks. A national mine network has been established to coordinate all mine-related efforts, including those of Government agencies — in particular our Humanitarian Assistance Agency, the Corps of Engineers, security organs and relevant ministries — and those of international organizations, especially the United Nations. Action is taken on three tracks: awareness-raising, victim assistance and mine removal. I cite all of these examples in order to outline my

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Government's commitment and its serious demining efforts, in coordination with international efforts.

The problem of landmines and ordnance remains a major obstacle to development projects and reconstruction in many countries, especially developing countries. The Sudan's experience in the Nuba mountains region has been promising thanks to the assistance of the United Nations and of the European Union, which has resulted in the return of civilians to their villages and in the resumption of grazing and agricultural activities. That gives us hope for the implementation of the United Nations mine-action strategy according to the established timetable and for the creation of an international environment free of landmines, especially in the light of the fact that there are 126 States parties to the Convention thus far. That fact underscores the wide acceptance of international standards and measures on anti-personnel mines.

We are certain that further progress can be achieved if the efforts of the United Nations and of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining are coordinated with national and regional efforts, through partnerships with all concerned parties and relevant international organizations. We are counting on financing from the World Bank and from other international lending agencies to provide us with the resources necessary to ensure the implementation of the mine-action strategy of the United Nations.

In closing, I should like to emphasize my country's firm resolve to cooperate with United Nations assistance programmes to eliminate mines in the Sudan. From this rostrum, I call upon all Member States to assist mine-affected countries in developing our national programmes, in accordance with the Ottawa Convention on the prohibition of landmines, in particular because we all recognize that landmines and other explosive devices pose risks to human beings, in addition to hindering national development projects in many countries.

Mr. Flores (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): A year ago, in this forum, the delegation of Peru stated that there was no doubt about the existence of the political will to eradicate anti-personnel mines and that it could not be otherwise, because they are horrific weapons that claim innocent victims, especially children.

For that reason, we were surprised to observe, in discussions in the First Committee on the draft resolution on the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, that political circumstances are being brought forward to justify their use. For Peru, there is no possible justification for the use of anti-personnel mines in conflicts, because they are inherently evil and, in technical language, are classified as excessively cruel weapons with indiscriminate effects ,in the mutilation of innocent victims, especially children, even when the conflict that caused their placement has ended.

In that context, Peru welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on assistance in mine action (A/57/430). Especially important is the progress made in preparing a rapid response plan to meet demining needs in emergency situations and the inclusion of demining programmes in operations carried out under the mandate of the United Nations. Peru shares the opinion of the Secretary-General that organizations devoted to mine action should widen the scope of their activities, integrating them with humanitarian and development programmes.

A year ago, we reported the progress made by Peru in the total eradication of anti-personnel mines. For the Peruvian delegation, it is gratifying to have this new opportunity to share with the rest of the international community the progress made in 2002.

Peru is fulfilling the two sets of complementary activities on mines. On the one hand, we have taken the necessary action to avoid the use of mines in the future; on the other, we are dealing with the effects of mines that have already been placed. Peru has completed the destruction of the 321,368 anti-personnel mines that were held in the Peruvian arsenal. The process has enjoyed the support and verification of representatives of the international community, the United Nations, the Organization of American States, the International Committee of the Red Cross and civil society.

Similarly, we are coordinating with our police forces the demining of the 1,400 high-tension towers that required protection during the terrible period of terrorism in our country. Accordingly, in April 2002, Peru and the Organization of American States expanded the scope of the agreement on the Comprehensive Action against Antipersonnel Mines, signed in May 2001. That expansion will make it

possible to extend cooperation to demining activities on 350 high-tension electrical towers.

Likewise, a draft bill has been prepared for the creation of a Peruvian anti-personnel demining centre, which will develop the planning and operations necessary to fulfil governmental goals, based on obligations under the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, as well as coordination with national units in charge of implementing the aforementioned mandates.

The eradication of anti-personnel mines is part of a more ambitious goal of Peru's foreign policy aimed at limiting arms expenditures in South America in order to devote greater funds to social investment. Within that policy, Peru is interested in transforming the region, the world's first nuclear-weapon-free zone, into its first zone free of anti-personnel mines. In the context of that effort, the foreign and defence ministers of the Andean Community — consisting of Peru, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela — approved last June the Andean Charter for peace and security and the limitation and control of foreign defence spending, which, in chapter IX, entitled "Commitments to the eradication of anti-personnel landmines", reaffirms the commitment of all the Andean countries not to use, develop, produce, acquire, stockpile, conserve or transfer anti-personnel landmines, directly or indirectly, under any circumstance whatsoever.

Subsequently, in July 2002, all the presidents of the 12 South American countries approved the Declaration on the South American zone of peace and cooperation, which was duly welcomed by the General Assembly yesterday. The Declaration recognizes the gradual elimination, leading as soon as possible to the total eradication of anti-personnel mines. We hope that these and other efforts will allow us to achieve the shared objective of banning anti-personnel mines.

Mr. Khalid (Pakistan): For the last many years, our discussions on the consequences of the indiscriminate use of landmines have had mixed results. Ironically, the use of landmines have mostly harmed the civilian population in various parts of the world. Over 70 developing countries, including Afghanistan, Angola, Azerbaijan, Ethiopia, Burundi, Somalia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, are suffering because of the irresponsible use of landmines as a result of foreign occupation or internal conflicts. It is alarming to know that an estimated 110 million anti-personnel mines are currently deployed in 70 countries. The conflict areas in which these landmines have been implanted not only pose a danger to human and animal lives, but are also a major source of serious social and economic problems.

In Afghanistan, there are over 10 million landmines scattered all over the country, which is perhaps the largest mine-strewn land in the world. The miseries of the people of Afghanistan are further compounded by the remnants of unexploded ordnance following the war against Al Qaeda. We appreciate the efforts undertaken by the Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan, under the auspices of the United Nations. We hope that the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), which assumed the responsibility of clearing mines and unexploded ordnance in Afghanistan in June this year, will be able to discharge its duties in a diligent manner.

We are alarmed to see that mine and unexploded ordnance contamination has affected 31 out of the 32 provinces, in 1,585 villages in Afghanistan. The Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan has estimated that, at current levels of the Programme's funding, as many as 360 square kilometres of high-priority mined land can be cleared within the next seven years. We think that, with additional resources, this period can be further reduced and many precious lives saved. UNMAS estimates indicate that as many as 300 Afghans are killed every month in the mine-infested areas, while the number of those injured is much higher. Almost half of those injured have been treated in hospitals in Pakistan. Despite pressure on our medical facilities, we have been providing relief to Afghan mine victims.

We have taken careful note of the Secretary-General's report entitled "Assistance in mine action", contained in document A/57/430. We are glad that the Secretary-General has outlined the United Nations Mine Action Strategy for 2001-2005. In this regard, we support the Secretary-General's initiative to raise awareness on mine-action problems, to develop a rapid response plan and to build up the capacities of national Governments. We also hope that the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action will chalk out a comprehensive plan of action, in coordination with various relevant agencies of the United Nations, in

addressing emergencies resulting from mines and unexploded ordnance.

We also appreciate the positive role played by the International Committee of the Red Cross and other non-governmental organizations in responding to mine-related emergencies. We would suggest that there should be greater interaction between the United Nations Mine Action Service and reputable non-governmental organizations involved in demining efforts.

Coming back to the Secretary-General's report, we are somewhat disappointed to see that UNMAS received only $28 million from donors between January 2001 and August 2002. Since these funds are made available through voluntary contributions, we urge the donor nations to bridge the gap that exists in the overwhelming majority of demining operations in various countries, especially Afghanistan, and the scarce resources available for the realization of these tasks. We are particularly concerned because Afghan refugees, taking shelter in Pakistan, have been unable to return to their homes due to the slow pace of demining operations. We hope that the United Nations and the international community will take due note of the precarious situation prevailing in Afghanistan and respond to this emergency on a priority basis.

Pakistan has actively contributed to the demining operations in several affected countries in the past. Our participation in the demining operations in Kuwait, Cambodia, Angola, Bosnia and the Western Sahara reflects our commitment.

Since 1997, Pakistan has declared a moratorium on the export of landmines. We have also ratified the Amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and have submitted information pursuant to Article XI (2) and Article XIII (4) of the Amended Protocol II. We remain ready to consider further measures and initiatives in the relevant multilateral forums to address the problem arising from the indiscriminate use of landmines.

The Secretary-General's report makes cursory mention of the mine action situation in South Asia. Pakistan has been obliged to take precautionary defensive measures in the face of massive Indian military deployment against our country since December of last year. We will de-escalate as soon as India starts the demining process. According to Human Rights Watch, several hundred Indian civilian and military casualties took place during the planting of landmines in the wake of the Indian military build-up along the international border and the Line of Control. This is an unfortunate and completely avoidable loss of life, caused by the irresponsible use of landmines.

Mr. President, allow me to state that Pakistan enjoys a unique record on clearing all minefields after the three wars in South Asia. There has never been a humanitarian situation caused by the use of these mines. We remain committed to ensuring that the mines in our military inventory will never become the cause of civilian casualties in Pakistan or anywhere else.

In the past decade, great strides have been made in understanding the horrific effects of landmines and in stigmatizing their use and production. It is time to take the remaining steps, in the relevant multilateral forums, for effective control of these landmines and unexploded ordnance.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): On the question of mines, Egypt speaks from experience — indeed, painful experience — that lasted more than half a century. During that time, Egypt lost approximately 8,000 of its nationals to landmines.

My country is one of the most seriously affected countries when it comes to mines. Several battles during the Second World War took place on our territory; they left behind 280,000 hectares of land that had to be demined. This is a serious obstacle to the development of the area, near the northern coastline, which could otherwise be exploited for agricultural and tourist purposes.

In order to face this grave challenge, in the year 1991 Egypt undertook an ambitious effort to clear the land of mines and unexploded ordnance. Egypt is still shouldering the main burden, both human and material, involved in implementing this project, despite the fact that foreign forces left those mines behind on Egyptian territory. Hence, Egypt's call to the countries that planted the mines to shoulder the cost of clearing them. This would enable the Egyptian people to use their own land for their own benefit.

Within the context of Egypt's efforts to face the problem of landmines and their impact, we have for the last three years cooperated with the United Nations Mining Unit in the field of landmines, which resulted in a mission being sent by the United Nations to Egypt in order to evaluate the problem during the period 9 to

23 February 2000. The United Nations then published a report dated 7 July 2000, which included a comprehensive review of the problem of mines in Egypt and practical proposals for dealing with this problem. Egypt will pursue its contacts with the United Nations Secretariat and other concerned countries to consider how to clear these mines on Egyptian territory. For its part, in the year 2000, Egypt established a high-level mechanism to organize the necessary national administrative and technical committee to deal with the problem of landmines and unexploded ordnance. The national committee is made up of representatives of the ministries and relevant agencies supervising the clearance of mines and other war remnants.

We have studied the Secretary-General's report on assistance in mine action. We have also taken note of the United Nations Mine Action Strategy for the year 2001-2005 referred to in the report. We have presented our remarks to the relevant unit in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Regrettably, the review and assessment that were supposed to be conducted on the Strategy have been postponed until next year. We wish that the United Nations unit had attached the remarks of Member States to the report which is before us today. Regrettably, this did not happen.

We have previously stated that the United Nations Mine Action Strategy for 2001-2005 is a departure from what was adopted regarding the Strategy in 1998. We have mentioned that this Strategy is characterized by shortcomings in dealing with the needs of the affected countries. Hence, our call for a review of the Strategy. We aspire to making this a reality next year. The remarks of the Member States should be taken into consideration in order to ensure that the Strategy is effective and efficient and attains its objectives.

In conclusion, regarding the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production, and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, we wish to emphasize that Egypt agrees with the humanitarian objectives of the Convention, but many countries, including my own, have reservations on it. These reservations have been referred to at several international forums. Foremost among them is that the Convention ignores the responsibilities of the States that laid mines in the land of others and that have not taken any action to remove them. There is a lack of clarity and comprehensiveness in the Convention concerning the assistance necessary for this purpose. In addition to that is the fact that the Convention totally ignores the rights and responsibilities of States to secure their borders and to defend their own territories.

Egypt joins previous speakers who have expressed their concern regarding reports and information that some of the member States signatories to the Ottawa Convention have reverted to the use of anti-personnel mines. This reflects on the Convention's credibility and strengthens the call for its revision and for assessment of the methodology for dealing with the whole problem.

Mr. Kittikhoun (Lao People's Democratic Republic): At the outset, allow me to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General for the comprehensive and informative report (A/57/430) he has presented to us on assistance in mine action. The report not only focuses on the progress achieved in implementing the six strategic goals and related objectives outlined in the United Nations Mine Action Strategy for 2001-2005. It has also given us an overview of mine action undertaken in various countries of the world by United Nations programmes and other related agencies. Furthermore, the report also outlines lessons and experiences learned from the past and gives us guidance on how to tackle effectively the mine issue in the future.

The international community continues to be concerned about the question of mines and other unexploded ordnance (UXO) that are present as a result of protracted wars, regional conflicts and internal struggles. National Governments have made all the efforts they possibly could to resolve that problem. Yet, millions of landmines and other unexploded ordnance are still buried in the soil or are scattered on the surface in more than 60 countries around the world. Thousands of innocent people are killed or injured every day. Therefore, every effort should be made to intensify international cooperation in order to address that issue more effectively.

In February 2001, at the age of 41, Mr. Viengthong, the father of a family, struggling for survival in a remote village in Attapeu, a southern province of Laos, was cutting hillside grass with a long blade. Suddenly, he made contact with an anti-personnel cluster bomblet. The bomb exploded. He lost his left eye and was completely blinded in the other.

The blast also caused serious impairment to his hearing. In short, the rest of his life has been ruined as a result. This sad story is only one of the many tragic accidents that have occurred, which can again occur any day, at any time, anywhere in the 15 unexploded-ordnance-contaminated Lao provinces.

In fact, few countries in the history of warfare have experienced anything like what we did in Laos: the heaviest aerial bombardment of the Indo-China war, particularly between 1964 and 1973. During that period, more than 400,000 bombing missions were launched, dropping more than 2 million tons of bombs on our small, poor country. More than 25 years after the end of the war, unexploded ordnance contamination still affects 50 per cent of the country's total land mass. Unexploded ordnance continues to limit the physical safety, livelihood and food security of people in 25 per cent of all villages in the Lao People's Democratic Republic and constitutes a significant obstacle to broader socio-economic development.

In order to address this problem, the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic set up in 1996 the Lao National Unexploded Ordnance Programme (UXO-Lao), with the objectives of reducing the number of civilian casualties from unexploded ordnance and increasing the amount of land available for food production and other development activities. UXO-Lao activities are divided into four important components: community awareness, training and capacity-building, survey, and clearance. The programme is now fully operational in 15 of the UXO-contaminated provinces and has a total national work force of 1,156. Since its inception, UXO-Lao has cleared 26.7 square kilometres of land, including 873 hectares in 2001, and has educated some 800,000 people nationwide about the dangers of UXO.

The UXO-Lao trust fund, supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), continues to be the main channel for contributions to the work of UXO-Lao. Funding has been provided by UNDP, UNICEF, the European Union, and the Governments of Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States. Some international implementing partners, such as Handicapped International, the Mine Advisory Group, Norwegian People's Aid, and so forth, also support the programme. In that regard, the Lao Government would like to express sincere gratitude to all donors for their generous assistance and support, which have rendered the UXO-Lao trust fund activities possible. It is our fervent hope that the international community will continue to lend its support and assistance to our efforts achieve the objectives set out in the programme.

It is sad to note that landmines and unexploded ordnance are still threatening the lives of people in many regions of the world. For many countries, in particular developing countries, landmines and unexploded ordnance constitute an obstacle to social and economic development. In order to ensure a peaceful and productive life for those now living with the threat of landmines, we believe that, through concerted global efforts and cooperation with the United Nations as a focal point for mine action, the huge tasks lying ahead can be accomplished.

Mr. Scott (Australia): In this difficult time, we continue to make considerable progress in strengthening international norms against anti-personnel landmines. Nevertheless, the battle is far from over. Indeed, there are constant reminders that much work remains ahead of us. The fact that this year's Landmine Monitor Report, published by The International Campaign to Ban Landmines, estimates that a further 15,000 to 20,000 landmine casualties occurred during 2001 — the same as in the previous year — is a clear reminder that we must redouble our efforts.

We can address this human tragedy only if we bring a halt to the use of all anti-personnel landmines through universal adherence to, and respect for, the Ottawa Convention and by allocating the necessary resources for mine clearance, mine awareness and victim assistance activities. Australia offers its full support to the Convention and encourages the broadest participation possible. My Government continues to work closely with other Member States to encourage wider adherence to the Convention. We value the opportunity to share experiences and approaches with those equally committed to universal adoption of the Convention. We urge any State that is facing difficulties in committing to, or meeting its obligations under, the Convention to discuss their concerns with other Members to identify the necessary support.

Australia supports the key principles, strategic goals and objectives of the United Nations Mine Action

Strategy for the period 2001-2005 by: providing core funds to the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) for its coordination role in mine action activities; by funding mine action interventions that help build national and local capacities to plan, coordinate and implement mine action programmes; by encouraging the use and development of the International Mine Action Standards; and by providing considerable resources for mine action globally.

Ms. Jarbussynova (Kazakhstan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Development and stability in our region are key concerns for Australia. Through support of those Asian countries that are heavily mine-affected, Australia's mine action programme contributes to promoting a prosperous and stable future. Our efforts continue to focus on the Asia-Pacific region, specifically South-East Asia and the South Pacific. Over the past 12 months we have worked closely with the Governments of Canada, Thailand, Japan and New Zealand to build support for the Convention in South and South-East Asia and the South Pacific.

I would like to make particular reference to the initiative of Thailand in hosting a regional landmines conference for countries of the Association of South-East Asian Nations in May of this year. Australia, together with Canada and Japan, had the pleasure of co-sponsoring that event. The meeting was a particularly valuable opportunity for Government and non-government representatives to exchange views and ideas on how best to address the landmines problem in South-East Asia. It was also an opportunity to better understand the barriers to accession or ratification and served to underline the difficulties in making progress, which, at best, will be incremental. Australia warmly welcomes Thailand's offer to host the Fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention. A meeting in South-East Asia will give much-needed impetus to efforts to build support for the Convention in that heavily mine-affected region.

The Australian Government continues its firm commitment to mine action and over the past 12 months has committed more than 12 million Australian dollars to a range of humanitarian mine action programmes. With 73 million Australian dollars expended since January 1996, the Australian Government is well advanced in meeting its undertaking to provide some 100 million Australian dollars on mine action activities for the decade to December 2005. Once again, the main recipients of Australia's mine action funding are Sri Lanka, Cambodia and Laos. Reinforcing that focus on South-East Asia, we are pleased that we will shortly commence funding a three-year mine clearance project in partnership with the Government of Viet Nam.

In recognition of the significant mine and unexploded ordnance problem faced by Afghanistan, Australia has contributed a total of 3 million Australian dollars to mine clearance activities in that country. In this context, Australia is encouraged by the recent undertaking by the new Government in Afghanistan to accede to the Ottawa Convention. This is a significant move and — we would hope — a move that will encourage others who continue to insist on the necessity of anti-personnel landmines to seriously reconsider their position with regard to the Ottawa Convention.

Equally, and in conclusion, we acknowledge and welcome the announcements made by Sri Lanka and the world's newest State, Timor-Leste, that they will move quickly towards accession to the Convention.

The Russian Federation attaches great importance to the whole range of problems relating to mine action. We are grateful to the United Nations Secretary-General for his report, which reflects key milestones in implementing the United Nations Mine Action Strategy. We support efforts made under the aegis of the United Nations to mobilize the international community to eliminate the consequences posed by the danger of mines.

Russia knows from bitter experience about the tragedy, the suffering caused by the uncontrolled use of mines. Despite the fact that more than half a century has elapsed since the end of the Second World War, each year the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Emergency Situations of Russia neutralize tens of thousands of pieces of ordinance. Unfortunately, today we are also confronting more modern manifestations of the dangers of mines. Russian soldiers are falling victim to mines planted by terrorists in the territory of the Chechen Republic. Our peacekeepers, in carrying out the crucial job of maintaining peace in the Georgia-Abkhaz conflict, are at the same time demining in the area of their responsibility. Nevertheless, more than ten people were killed or injured as a result of exploding mines in that area.

The report of the Secretary-General goes into detail about steps being taken under the aegis of the United Nations in mine clearance operations in various parts of the world. Russia supports the inclusion in the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations, where this is necessary, of provisions in support of demining. For our part, we are prepared to do whatever we can to support these activities.

I wish to inform you that in 2001-2002 Russia participated in a number of humanitarian demining projects. Under contract with the United Nations Mine Action Service in Kosovo, a territory of about 240,000 meters was demined. During the rebuilding of the Salang tunnel in Afghanistan, more than 4,000 mines and explosives were removed and rendered harmless. Together with our Spanish colleagues, a project is under way to train Afghan field engineers, and in fact 75 people have already been trained. Further, a project to demine a section of the Syrian-Turkish border is now being developed. We are prepared to play a practical role in demining operations under the Action Plan for Africa that was endorsed at the G8 Summit in Kananaskis.

The activities I have described are being carried out, inter alia, on the basis of a decree adopted by the Russian Government dealing with measures to ensure participation by the Russian Federation in international humanitarian demining programmes, operations and projects which regulate questions relating to the provision of assistance to other States in the area of mine action.

We support the conclusions contained in the Secretary-General's report regarding the need to elaborate national strategies to deal with the problem of mines. Russia's participation in mine clearance activities clearly attests to our commitment to international obligations in the area of dealing with anti-personnel mines, as well as our readiness to help overcome the negative consequences of regional crises.

The Russian Federation believes that banning the production, use, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel mines should be the ultimate goal of the international community. Here we advocate the gradual pursuit of this goal through a number of stages by ensuring the largest possible participation of States in Amended Protocol II, prohibiting or restricting the use of mines, booby-traps and other devices, of the 1980 Convention on certain conventional weapons. The basis of this document is a carefully honed balance which reflects the security and self-defence interests of States. We attach great importance to the holding in Geneva in December of this year of a meeting of the State Parties to this Protocol.

At the same time we think it is important to continue to work together with States Parties to the Ottawa Convention and we deem important joint projects in the area of humanitarian demining which provide good opportunities for this.

In conclusion, I would like to stress our readiness to continue our cooperation with the United Nations and its various structures in mine action activities, both in peacekeeping operations and during post-conflict rehabilitation of States.

Mr. Kulyk (Ukraine): The issue of mine action has been on the agenda of the General Assembly since 1993. Since the Ottawa Convention entered into force in March 1999, the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines have dramatically been reduced. Notwithstanding these remarkable achievements, landmines continue to be deployed each year at greater risk to local populations. This adds to the large number of mines and other unexploded ordnance left as a result of armed conflicts and thus underscores the urgent need for a significant increase in mine clearing efforts by the international community in order to eliminate existing threats.

In this regard, it is absolutely necessary to convince all parties to halt new deployments of anti-personnel mines in order to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of mine clearance operations.

While progress has been made in the ratification process of the Ottawa Convention, its universalization remains a serious challenge. More and more countries, including Ukraine, are now facing the need to implement in full the relevant obligations. Accordingly, while advocacy to stigmatize the use of landmines continues, efforts now should also concentrate on greater support to countries for the implementation of their specific treaty obligations.

Ukraine considers mine action to be an important component of United Nations humanitarian activities. Landmines are first and foremost a humanitarian concern and must be addressed from this perspective. In this regard, we are encouraged by the work that has been done over the past year by the United Nations

Development Programme and the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), as well as a number of non-governmental organizations. We would like to emphasize the role of UNMAS as the focal point for mine action within the United Nations system. We recognize the progress made over the last 12 months in this field, particularly in terms of strategic planning, operational support and information management. Public and political awareness of landmines problems have become widespread. The development of new standards and mechanisms has strengthened international confidence in the integrity and value of mine action. It is important that advocacy against the use of anti-personnel landmines remains a priority goal.

Encouraging progress has been achieved in the implementation of almost all six strategic goals and related objectives outlined in the United Nations Mine Action Strategy for the period 2001-2005, submitted by the Secretary-General in October 2001, namely in the following areas: interagency assessment missions to the mine-affected countries and production of information related to mine action problems; finalization of a rapid response plan to meet mine action requirements in emergencies and the conduct of mine action programmes in United Nations mandated operations; further development and application of international mine action standards; and continued advocacy and support for the universalization and implementation of the main international Convention on the subject.

The United Nations Mine Action Strategy has become a useful instrument, and it should be further optimized by taking into consideration the impact of the landmine problem on the development of States.

The first year of its implementation has also demonstrated the need for a more systematic approach and for the definition of clear objectives in the overall spectrum of mine action activities. The development of the International Mine Action Standards is a step forward towards safe and effective demining. We hope that these standards will be officially circulated among the Member States and translated into many languages, and that they will be accepted as the main instrument for conducting mine action activities. We also see merit in conducting, during the coming year, a review of certain specific standards that are deemed too onerous.

While important progress has been made in mine action during the past five years, the number of countries and areas that require and request assistance also continues to increase. The need to obtain adequate resources remains a constant challenge for the United Nations. Therefore, the sustained commitment of all those involved in the relevant international efforts is required. The timely mobilization of resources from donors is essential to the success of mine action programmes.

We note with appreciation the fact that last year the technical, material and financial resources needed to meet the costs associated with mine clearance activities became more available, but the overall shortfall in funding remains a concern.

Since the vast majority of humanitarian mine action activities are funded from voluntary contributions, an effective and well-coordinated funding strategy between the United Nations and the donor community remains of crucial importance.

Ukraine deeply appreciates the commitment and the generosity demonstrated by many States Members of the United Nations, as well as by numerous organizations inside and outside of the United Nations system, to assist it with the implementation of its Ottawa Convention obligations.

Ukraine has extensive experience in modern demining technologies, and its advanced logistics base allows for the training of highly skilled specialists within a short period of time. Ukrainian mine clearance engineers are widely recognized in various regions of the world, including the former Yugoslavia, Angola, Sierra Leone and Lebanon. The Ukrainian units operate under United Nations standards and operational procedures, and we are ready to provide technical support to, and share our experience with, the United Nations missions in various countries.

With respect to the issue of mine clearance, Ukraine would like to draw the attention of the Assembly to another important aspect of the problem: unexploded ordnance and remnants of war. Ukraine, like many States in the region, is affected to a considerable extent by the presence in its soil of unexploded remnants of past wars. According to statistics, in the past five years our mine cleaners have neutralized over 50,000 explosive devices in the territory of Ukraine. We have invited United Nations

Mine Action Service specialists to carry out an independent assessment of the scale of this problem.

We have also started preparatory work aimed at establishing a national mine action centre. In this regard, we call for the continuation of the efforts of the United Nations to foster the establishment of mine action capacities in countries in which unexploded ordnance constitutes a serious threat to the safety, health and lives of the local population.

Tremendous humanitarian development problems caused by the presence of mines and other unexploded ordnance continue to constitute an obstacle to the development of many States and have serious and long-lasting social and economic consequences, most of all for the peoples of the mine-affected countries. We believe that the issue of mine clearance should remain a priority in the global anti-mine action campaign.

Mr. Moesby (Denmark): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries Cyprus and Malta, as well as the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) country of the European Economic Area — Iceland — align themselves with this statement.

Allow me to begin by paying tribute to all those involved in combating anti-personnel landmines and unexploded ordnance around the world. Allow me in particular to commend the relentless efforts by the affected communities themselves; the Standing Committees and States parties to the Ottawa Convention; the United Nations Mine Action Service and all relevant United Nations agencies; the Mine Action Support Group; the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and its many affiliated non-governmental organizations (NGOs); the International Committee of the Red Cross; the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining; and all other institutions and organizations united in their common cause to decrease human suffering and increase human security.

Anti-personnel landmines and unexploded ordnance continue to inflict death and injury all over the world. There are an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 mine casualties every year, and most often innocent civilians are the victims. We must not forget that assistance in mine action, before anything else, is about saving lives and reducing human suffering. Each step should contribute to fulfilling this aim. But landmines and unexploded ordnance also have serious secondary social and economic consequences. The mutilation of victims places a heavy burden on countries already struggling to make ends meet. In post-conflict societies, landmines and unexploded ordnance impede economic recovery and development by preventing people from returning to their homes and working their land.

Responsibility for addressing the problem of landmines and unexploded ordnance rests with the authorities of mine-affected countries. But acquiring the necessary institutional means to deal effectively with the problem sometimes poses a formidable challenge. When national resources are lacking, the suffering caused by anti-personnel landmines and unexploded ordnance needs to be addressed within a humanitarian and development framework. The United Nations can play an important role in both.

Allow me in this context to commend the Secretary-General's report on assistance in mine action. The report constitutes an important element of a more systematic and coordinated approach to international assistance in mine action. The European Union and its partners welcome the progress described in the report and support the measures undertaken by the Secretary-General to optimize the United Nations Mine Action Strategy for 2001-2005.

We deem particularly praiseworthy the readiness by the United Nations immediately to implement suggestions by Member States regarding cooperation and coordination; integration and prioritization; scope of mine action; political commitment; and information sharing.

Important progress has been reported regarding the six strategic goals of the Mine Action Strategy. This progress includes improvements in information management; finalization of a rapid-response plan; development of national mine action plans; implementation of surveys; and steps towards improved institutional coordination and integration of mine action into overall assistance and development schemes.

Such measures are all very encouraging and clearly demonstrate that assistance in mine action is moving in the right direction. Particularly encouraging

are the steps towards greater national ownership, sustainability and overall integration of mine-action programmes into wider relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development efforts. The formulation of national mine-action strategies, and the integration of these into national relief and reconstruction plans, are wholeheartedly encouraged.

However, as stated by the Secretary-General in his conclusions, more needs to be done. Placing humanitarian mine action within the mainstream of humanitarian and development assistance requires further integration at all levels. For its part, the European Union will promote such measures through its support to socio-economic impact studies and landmine impact surveys and through its partnerships with affected communities and Governments and humanitarian and development actors.

Long-term development objectives and a firm political commitment by national authorities are crucial to the success of assistance in mine action. Mine-action programmes will eventually reach a stage at which the most acute threat to populations and economies has been countered or contained, whether through risk education, clearance or marking. At that stage, mine action will gradually develop into a more rehabilitation- and development-oriented activity. This has important implications for issues of prioritization, national ownership and funding. It is important that national mine-action strategies be set up with a view to ensuring effective decision-making about short-, medium- and long-term priorities. National and international support for mine action must be sustainable and must encourage and support national initiatives and institutions. The need to devote greater attention to transition strategies, as recommended by the Secretary-General, is highly relevant if the lasting and constructive impact of mine action is to be promoted.

The needs of the mine-affected community must set the basic parameters for assistance in mine action. The allure of operational mine clearance should not deflect attention from other, equally relevant, aspects of mine action: advocacy; mine-risk education; victim assistance; mapping, surveying and marking; and stockpile destruction. The shift of emphasis in the methodology of landmine impact surveys, described in the Secretary-General's report, from square metres and statistics to real-life socio-economic impact, is highly desirable. Placing landmines and unexploded ordnance in their proper social context makes assistance in mine action more sensitive to the requirements of affected communities.

The European Union and its associated partners believe that anti-personnel landmines and unexploded ordnance need to be dealt with locally and globally — locally, through community-based and national efforts; and globally, through the Ottawa Convention, through the United Nations system and through international cooperation and coordination. Allow me in this context to commend the chairmanship of the Mine Action Support Group for its efforts in coordinating donor support. The European Union will devote itself to furthering international coordination and cooperation on mine action and to forging partnerships with all relevant institutions and actors, not least those in mine-affected countries.

The European Union will continue its firm support for the universal and speedy implementation of the Ottawa Convention and the work relating to Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). It is a testimony to the success and momentum of the Ottawa Convention that 130 States have acceded to the treaty. The public advocacy strategy envisaged in the Secretary-General's report should support this process and build on existing networks, with a view to strengthening cooperation with actors already engaged in advocacy and universalization.

The European Union will work for greater collaboration and coherence in international assistance to mine action. By pledging a total of 240 million euros in support of mine action for the period 2002-2009, the European Union has become one of the world's leading donors in this sector. Bilateral assistance from individual EU member States further emphasizes the prominent role played by the European Union in international assistance to mine action.

That important commitment was underpinned by the adoption in July 2001 of two European Community (EC) regulations on action against anti-personnel landmines. The regulations provide for an integrated and focused EC strategy for assistance in mine action, in addition to a multi-annual programming plan for 2002-2004, which is currently being finalized. The EC strategy is written in response to the Ottawa Convention and is closely related to the United Nations mine-action strategy for 2001-2005. The EC strategy

states as one of its key principles that EC support to humanitarian mine action must further the objectives of the international community and promote the effectiveness and efficiency of international assistance in mine action. Assistance through the common EC budget will therefore seek to complement and reinforce measures already undertaken by the international community — by supporting activities which enhance coordination, management, efficiency and effectiveness.

The European Union and its partners firmly believe that international law and assistance in mine action will help mitigate the disastrous humanitarian, social and economic consequences of anti-personnel landmines and unexploded ordnance throughout the world. The European Union and its partners therefore urge all Member States to join the international mine-action community in a sustained and global effort to curtail the suffering caused by these indiscriminate weapons. Step by step, mine by mine, assistance in mine action — based on partnership and dialogue — will bring us closer to that objective.

Mr. Rivas (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like first of all to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/57/430) on this item, which describes the progress made in consolidating the strategic goals and related objectives outlined in the United Nations Mine Action Strategy for 2001-2005.

"During the course of this meeting today, at least two Colombians will become victims of anti-personnel landmines in our territory." Those were the heart-rending words of Mr. Francisco Santos, Vice-President of the Republic of Colombia, speaking at a recent international forum in Bogota on challenges posed by anti-personnel mines in my country. And it is those words that I would like to recall in speaking to the Assembly this morning as we undertake an overall assessment of the current threat that anti-personnel landmines continue to pose in Colombia, as well as an overview of the actions taken by my Government in fighting this serious problem.

It is impossible to come up with a precise figure for the number of anti-personnel landmines currently in Colombian territory. Approximate figures based on studies undertaken in recent years, however, suggest that there are about 100,000 such mines, most of which are concentrated in four departments of our country — areas where the Colombian Government has exerted major efforts during the past five years in an endeavour to permanently and definitively eradicate these cruel artefacts, sadly referred to as "hidden sentinels" and "enemies who do not sleep". Its aim is also to create, in a parallel way, a culture of prevention with regard to future anti-personnel mine accidents, as well as a comprehensive rehabilitation strategy for mine victims with respect to their role in society.

On 6 September 2001, in the framework of the Millennium Summit, Colombia demonstrated its firm commitment to the eradication of anti-personnel mines by depositing its instrument of ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction — commonly known as the Ottawa Convention — thus becoming the 103rd State Party to that instrument. However, the initiatives undertaken to prevent and eradicate their use in Colombia date back several years. In 1996, the Colombian military industry (INDUMIL) definitively suspended the manufacture of anti-personnel mines and proceeded to dismantle and destroy their production facilities.

Since we became a State party to the Ottawa Convention, our commitment has been demonstrated through equally tangible results. In conformity with that important Convention, we created, in January this year, the National Authority for Mine Action, an inter-institutional committee at the highest level, headed by the Vice-President of the Republic and composed of various State and non-State entities that enriched with their views and their experiences the planning of strategies to completely eliminate mines in Colombia. Likewise, Colombia has participated actively and consistently in the four Meetings of States Parties that have taken place since 1999, held at Maputo, Mozambique; at Managua, Nicaragua; and at Geneva, Switzerland. I should add that, since last year, my country has been submitting the annual report required under article 7 of the Ottawa Convention, summarizing actions undertaken within the framework of that international instrument.

None of those things would have been possible without the invaluable support and cooperation of the international community throughout the process. Two countries in particular — Switzerland and Canada — stand out among the nations that truly worked in partnership with the Government of Colombia during the implementation of the Ottawa Convention, through

their constant and committed assistance, through the sharing of experience with regard to creating the National Authority and through the technical cooperation of experts on anti-personnel mine action. Also worthy of mention is the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, which bases its work on the contributions of various industrialized countries and of international organizations, such as the United Nations, and is currently the leading authority and the focus of every world initiative on the subject. The United Nations has generously offered its assistance to find a solution to this problem through possible future visits by the United Nations Mine Action Service. My country welcomes the Organization's willingness in that regard, and the inhabitants of the affected areas will especially appreciate any assistance that we may receive.

However, much remains to be done. Lawless armed groups continue to plant anti-personnel mines indiscriminately in Colombian territory. The sad, long-term effects of only one of those artefacts — or of the mere suspicion of their presence — on an entire population are well known. Not only do anti-personnel mines profoundly affect the physical and psychological integrity of entire populations, but their negative impact has the most serious collateral effects, such as the unusability of farmable land and the destruction of natural resources and of goods and services, among many other things. In addition, the rehabilitation of victims implies higher costs for the State and irreparably damages the relationships of victims with their families and with society. That has results so profound that they affect a multitude of people besides those who suffered the direct consequences of the accident.

In the first nine months of this year, 459 people fell victim to anti-personnel mines in Colombia — that is, two victims per day, as I noted at the beginning of my statement, echoing the words of the Vice-President of the Republic. Sadly, 50 per cent of the civilian victims tend to be children, some of whom endure amputation of one of their limbs, but many of whom lose their lives instantly or after painful agony.

Addressing this item on the agenda constitutes a space for reflection and a platform for finding joint solutions to a problem of such magnitude. The effort to totally eliminate anti-personnel mines has facilitated an important rapprochement among the various sectors of the State and of civil society. But such efforts require additional support that the international community and international organizations such as the United Nations are capable of providing. Colombia will highly appreciate any initiative of the Organization in that regard. Only thus will we be able to look to the future on the basis of the very objective that is our common denominator: a world free of anti-personnel mines.

Mr. Assaf (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I am pleased to express our thanks and appreciation to the Secretary-General for the report submitted under this agenda item concerning assistance in mine action (A/57/430). That report emphasizes the continued global commitment to achieving progress with regard to mine action and highlights objectives, progress made and imminent challenges.

Landmines are a global humanitarian problem whose solution requires the coordination of international action at the levels of Government and civil society. Mines are assassins in hiding to which victims come. They are patient murderers that lie in wait for their victims even decades after the end of wars and conflicts, threatening the lives of innocent civilians and hindering economic and social development.

The global scourge of anti-personnel mines can be illustrated through statistics. The total number of mines is estimated in the hundreds of millions, and they are scattered over 90 States — that is, nearly half of all Member States — and each year claim some 15,000 victims, the overwhelming majority of whom are civilians. In the face of that challenge, the United Nations has adopted a set of measures aimed at eliminating the scourge of mines. It has provided technical and financial assistance, established the United Nations Mine Action Service and an Internet web site, and adopted a Mine Action Strategy of six objectives.

In that context, the item on assistance in mine action was included on the agenda of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly of 1993. Since then, the General Assembly has adopted all of its resolutions on this agenda item by consensus. We can thus say that the countdown to the elimination of landmines has, indeed, begun. But further efforts are needed to achieve the other goals.

Lebanon is one of the 90 States affected by landmines. The Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon left a large number of landmines, estimated by the

United Nations to be 450,000, scattered over an area of 472 square kilometres — that is to say, about 5 per cent of the territory of Lebanon. Between May 2000 and the first half of 2002 those landmines claimed 35 lives and resulted in the injury of 192 other people, most of them civilians, including a large number of children. In addition to the human loss, these landmines prevent a sector of the local population from returning to their land, impede the work of the United Nations Interim Force in Southern Lebanon (UNIFIL) and obstruct the Government's development efforts. These mines also prevent the agricultural and industrial development of these tracts of land. The Secretary-General spoke about this problem in his most recent report to the Security Council on UNIFIL and described it as "a matter of utmost concern." (*S/2002/746, para. 16*)

Faced with this serious problem, the Government of Lebanon has moved to find appropriate solutions. It adopted a set of measures that, on the whole, were in line with the six strategic goals outlined in the United Nations Mine Action Strategy for 2001-2005 and set out in last year's report of the Secretary-General (A/56/448/Add.1). In brief, the most important of these measures are the following. First, in line with the strategic goal of putting in place national and local capacities to plan and coordinate mine-action programmes, Lebanon has established a National Office to Combat Landmines, whose staff includes a number of specialized officers from the Lebanese army. The National Office is playing a pioneering role in coordinating mine-action efforts by the Lebanese Government, the United Nations, the international community and non-governmental organizations.

Secondly, towards reaching the strategic goal of putting in place a rapid response capability to meet mine-action requirements in emergency situations, the United Nations and a number of individual countries responded to Lebanon's request for assistance in mine clearance and provided technical, material and financial assistance. Those countries and entities include the United States, the European Union, France, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia and Ukraine. In this regard, special mention must be made of the United Arab Emirates, which donated $50 million.

Early this year, an anti-landmine coordination centre for southern Lebanon was established with the participation of Lebanon, the United Nations and the United Arab Emirates. It manages and coordinates all mine-action activities. Two private companies have been contracted: Bactec International and Minetech International, which currently employ some 400 demining specialists in southern Lebanon. By the end of October, some 2.4 million square metres of land had been cleared and 17,793 anti-personnel landmines had been removed. However, it is not expected that those two private companies will finish their demining activities in southern Lebanon for several years, especially with the discovery of additional minefields. In that regard, Lebanon reiterates its demand that Israel hand over all maps and documents relating to landmines, in implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, including the most recent, Council resolution 1428 (2002).

Thirdly, in line with the strategic goal of making information available to all, the National Office to Combat Landmines, in cooperation with a number of non-governmental organizations in Lebanon, is offering counselling services and awareness-raising lessons on landmines for 150 schools in southern Lebanon, with a total of some 50,000 students.

In conclusion, Lebanon, which appreciates the solidarity of the international community regarding its landmine problem, reaffirms its cooperation with the international community to eliminate this scourge. We express our thanks to all mine-action actors, such as the United Nations, its specialized agencies, States and non-governmental organizations, which are all working hard to create a clean environment and a world free of landmines.

Mr. Kasemsarn (Thailand): Thailand welcomes the finding of the Landmine Monitor Report 2002 that the number of casualties from anti-personnel mines continues to decrease each year. Nevertheless, we are concerned that the number of victims of anti-personnel mines still remains high. Anti-personnel mines continue to pose a significant threat to human security. They do not discriminate between combatants and civilians, and randomly maim or kill innocent civilians, including women and children.

But the human costs do not represent the full picture of the landmine problem. Mines have also taken a heavy toll on wildlife and endangered species. The presence of landmines deters tourism and inhibits closer people-to-people contacts in certain areas. It poses an obstacle to infrastructure development, such as the construction of roads and railways. In sum, landmines impede a country's capacity to pursue

sustainable development. Scarce resources which could be used to promote further economic development have to be channelled to support important mine-action activities, such as mine clearance and victim rehabilitation. The establishment of a mine-free world and the universalization of the Ottawa process as one of the primary means to totally eliminate anti-personnel mines are thus an important and worthy undertaking for the international community.

That is why Thailand welcomed the adoption last year of the United Nations Mine Action Strategy for 2001-2005. In that regard, we appreciate the Secretary-General's report (A/57/430) on assistance in mine action, which reviews the first year of implementation of the six strategic goals and related objectives outlined in the United Nations Mine Action Strategy for 2001-2005. In view of the large number of organizations and agencies dealing with the various aspects of the landmine problem, Thailand supports the emphasis placed on the coordinating role of the United Nations in the fight against landmines and the call for effective partnerships. We note with concern the conclusion in the Secretary-General's report that the planned transition of mine action activities to national responsibility has in some cases been hampered by the inability of donors to continue funding programmes after such transfer. Discontinuation of such funding should not take place.

The challenge posed by anti-personnel mines to humanity is far too great for any one country to face alone. For affected developing countries in particular, international assistance and cooperation remain a vital component of their respective national strategies for dealing with the mine issue in all its aspects. This high-level political commitment to international assistance for affected developing countries was reaffirmed at the Fourth Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention, held in Geneva in September 2002. Despite its limited resources, Thailand has been at the forefront of efforts to tackle the landmine issue at the national, regional and global levels. But we readily admit that we would not have achieved many of our objectives were it not for the assistance and cooperation we have received from a variety of partners, including international organizations and non-governmental organizations.

At the national level, Thailand has destroyed a further 120,000 mines in its stockpiles, while work is progressing steadily in clearing mines in the field. A third humanitarian mine action unit to be based in the province of Surin in the north-eastern part of Thailand has been established, with the assistance of the United States, to undertake mine victim assistance and mine risk education activities. We are in the process of transferring some of the mine action expertise and experience from the military to civilian components. To enhance coordination of mine action activities nationwide, the National Mine Action Committee was revived. The United Nations Mine Action Service has helped promote greater awareness of the International Mine Action Standard (IMAS) in Thailand, and we are in the process of studying IMAS carefully. Thailand is particularly grateful to Canada for providing assistance in the form of mine detectors and to Japan for providing funds through the United Nations Development Programme to support the project on facilitating the national mine action programme in Thailand.

At the regional level, Thailand, with the assistance of the United States, hosted a regional workshop on mine action technologies for the Asia-Pacific region in March, to exchange experiences in mine action activities. In May of this year, Thailand, in cooperation with Canada, Australia and Japan, organized a regional seminar on landmines, which was attended by South-East Asian countries to promote greater mine awareness in the region and to explore further mine action activities in the future. Such activities should help encourage the participation of more countries in the Ottawa process.

At the global level, Thailand will host the Fifth Meeting of the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention from 15 to 19 September next year. In that connection, an advance team led by Ambassador Jean Lint of Belgium, President of the Fourth Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention, will be in Thailand later this month to make preparations in coordination with the Thai side to ensure the success of the Fifth Meeting of States Parties. The Meeting will provide an opportunity for States parties to, among other things, take stock of the progress made in mine action, exchange experiences in approaches to dealing with the landmine problem, examine the practical challenges faced by affected developing countries in dealing with the landmine problem and explore new avenues for international cooperation and assistance. I should like to take this opportunity to invite States parties and others to join us in Bangkok for that meeting, the first

ever to be held in Asia. I also wish to take this opportunity to thank The Honourable Bruce Scott of Australia for his kind words regarding Thailand's initiative on mine action.

Our national experience has shown that global partnerships involving donor States, affected developing States, international organizations and non-governmental organizations are necessary for affected developing States to have a fighting chance to tackle the multifaceted problem posed by anti-personnel mines. The call for affected developing countries to undertake greater national responsibility in resolving the landmine problem, therefore, should be accompanied by a commitment to greater international assistance for and cooperation with them. The need for such assistance is even greater for those affected developing countries that are concurrently experiencing extreme poverty and economic hardship.

Similar partnerships must be forged at the national level so that mine action becomes a truly national endeavour. Close cooperation between military units — which in many countries have the most expertise in mine clearance and other activities — civilian groups and local non-governmental organizations is a vital ingredient of a successful national effort. International support and assistance should take into account those different national approaches to dealing with the landmine issue and should be tailor-made, as appropriate, to the local situation.

Thailand thus intends to continue forging those vital partnerships, at the national, regional and global levels, to create a mine-free world and to generate adequate international cooperation and assistance to help achieve this common goal for humanity.

Mr. Son (Republic of Korea): At the outset, I would like to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (A/57/430) on the progress made in this, the first year of implementation of the United Nations Mine Action Strategy for 2001-2005.

As indicated in the Secretary-General's report, the definable set of objectives laid out in the five-year Strategy has provided an effective framework for steadily achieving and monitoring progress in the field of mine action. Since the issue of mine action was adopted as an agenda item of the General Assembly in 1993, the efforts of the international community to tackle the problem have brought greater public and political awareness to the issues surrounding landmines. As a result, we have seen a decrease in the production and use of anti-personnel landmines, a de facto moratorium on the transfer of such weapons, the clearing of many mined areas and the destruction of millions of stockpiled landmines. Most important, in recent years there has been a significant decline in the number of mine-related casualties.

While this progress is laudable, we must not lose sight of all that is still to be achieved. Landmines continue to pose a deadly threat to innocent civilians in conflict and post-conflict areas, not only claiming lives, but also impeding socio-economic development, reconstruction efforts and humanitarian aid operations. In response, the five-year Strategy employs a comprehensive approach to coordinating progress toward the goals of mine awareness, emergency assistance, mine clearance and resource mobilization, which are essential to countering that threat.

Let me take a few moments to comment on some of the latest developments in mine action to which, among many other things, my delegation attaches particular importance.

First, recognizing that the comprehensive collection and management of information is essential for effective mine action, my delegation welcomes the new and expanded missions undertaken by the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in conjunction with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other agencies to assess the needs of mine-affected countries. We further commend the continued development and maintenance of the E-Mine information network and hope to see the integration of additional resources similar to the Stockpile Destruction Resource into the E-Mine network as it becomes the centre for mine-related information on the Internet.

Secondly, with regard to mine action emergency response, my delegation notes with satisfaction the development of the rapid response plan and the further integration of emergency capabilities into the existing mechanisms. Moreover, we are confident that the plan to address the need for threat monitoring and contingency planning, currently being developed for eventual incorporation into the rapid response plan, will bolster emergency response capabilities.

Thirdly, as highlighted in the Secretary-General's conclusions, efforts to build effective partnerships with international organizations, with a view to harmonizing their mine action activities with humanitarian and development efforts, are crucial to the success of the fight against landmines. Close cooperation among all stakeholders continues to be indispensable, not only in coordinating activities and sharing best practices but also in mobilizing resources. In that regard, my delegation would like to stress the importance of the central coordinating role of the United Nations in generating synergy among diverse actors. In particular, we fully support the efforts of UNMAS, which has served as the focal point for international mine action activities.

Mr. Laotegguelnodji (Chad), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The Republic of Korea is committed to the global effort to protect civilians from the scourge of landmines. Since 1997, the Korean Government has faithfully enforced an indefinite extension of its moratorium on the export of anti-personnel mines. Last year, my Government acceded to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its Amended Protocol II. Furthermore, last September, in cooperation with North Korea, we undertook mine-clearing operations within the demilitarized zone of the Korean peninsula to reconnect the railways and roads whose use had been suspended between the South and the North for the past five decades.

In closing, the Republic of Korea recognizes that one of the prerequisites for effective action is a substantial resource base, and has thus provided support to various United-Nations-led mine assistance programmes. My Government has made annual contributions to the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action and remains an active participant in the Mine Action Support Group. We share the Secretary-General's view that the United Nations should secure sound funding to meet the growing requests from mine-affected countries. With that in mind, the Korean Government will continue to make due contributions to this noble cause.

Mr. Amer (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): Today's debate in the General Assembly on assistance in mine action is another attempt to call the international community's attention to the danger of the landmines laid in more than 60 countries, which kill or permanently disable thousands of individuals, including women and children. Landmines also cause economic, social and environmental destruction in those countries, hindering their attempts to achieve sustainable development.

The report of the Secretary-General (A/57/430) emphasizes, first, the progress made in the implementation of the six strategic goals and related objectives included in the United Nations Mine Action Strategy for 2001-2005. As stated in the report, progress has been made in achieving these objectives in several areas. We welcome in particular the distinguished work that United Nations programmes and agencies have carried out in my country and the consultations and assistance they have provided to other States to enhance their efforts to end the human tragedy caused by these weapons. It is our hope that the United Nations and its agencies will continue their support for national efforts to clear land affected by these indiscriminate weapons, which kill innocent people and cause immeasurable pain and damage.

In his report, the Secretary-General says that among the goals for the coming period is the universalization and implementation of the Convention of the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production, and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. My delegation recognizes this approach as an international milestone on the path to freeing humanity of this deadly scourge. Nonetheless, it has to be recognized that it will be difficult to achieve this goal unless the concerns expressed by Member States, including my own, are fully taken into consideration. Those States have expressed reservations on the Convention related to the protection of national security, especially that of countries that have no other means to protect their vast lands.

Moreover, the Convention ignores several important issues, such as the legal responsibility of the colonial countries that laid landmines in other countries. The principle of responsibility has been stressed by several international and regional organizations including the Group of 77 and China, meeting in Havana, and at the 1997 Harare meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Organization of African Unity. Those organizations have underlined the moral responsibility of the countries that laid landmines during the Second World War and during their colonial wars, and have called on those countries to make a reasonable contribution from their military budgets, to

offer information, to help countries remove the mines and to assist mine victims. In the Final Document of the twelfth Summit of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Durban in 1998, the heads of State or Government expressed their grave concern at the immeasurable human and material losses and harm to development plans that landmines have caused. They called on the countries that laid those mines to assume their responsibilities and help States by providing them with information and maps showing the location of the landmines and by providing technical assistance for clearing them, in addition to defraying the cost of clearing them and paying compensation for losses.

My country, Libya, has suffered and continues to suffer from the problem of landmines and other ordnance left from the Second World War. Reports of the United Nations and other organizations have stated that both Axis and allied forces laid millions of landmines and pieces of explosive ordnance in North Africa. These have killed or wounded thousands of innocent people and have permanently disabled many others, in addition to hindering efforts to combat desertification, build roads, exploit natural resources and reclaim land for agriculture.

More than fifty years have passed since the Second World War ended. There were victors and vanquished. Victorious and vanquished forces left our country, but the mines and the ordnance they planted remained, exploded from time to time by an innocent child at play or by a rural woman tending to her sheep or by a wandering aged person returning to his home or tent. The loss of a life or an eye, or arm or leg — these are tragedies that repeat themselves daily because the warring factions did not mark the locations of their mines, nor did they provide the Libyan authorities with maps and information that show the fields where these mines were planted. This makes it difficult to clear these mines.

When we were debating the issue during the previous session of this Assembly, my delegation mentioned the historical declaration by Libya and Italy in mid-1998, in which both countries agreed to cooperate in the clearance of landmines from Libyan territory, to provide medical treatment and compensation to those affected and to establish a joint fund for reconstruction of affected areas and a medical centre for treating those maimed by landmines. The Italian side has already begun implementing part of this declaration and we look forward to the implementation of the rest of the declaration's obligations. My delegation wants to emphasize this declaration as an excellent precedent, because it fulfils one of the primary issues of our foreign policy which we have expressed on several occasions. Today and from this forum we reiterate that we in Libya still hope that the two other countries that planted mines on Libyan territory during the Second World War, Germany and Britain, will emulate the Italian approach and conclude agreements with Libya to assist Libyan authorities in solving this problem and to compensate the Libyan people for the damages they suffered as a result of the planting of landmines more than five decades ago.

The large number of new and modern landmines that are still buried in many countries reminds us that the road ahead for the international community remains long and tedious until we can provide total protection for the innocent. Efforts made so far are encouraging. United Nations Member States need to renew their commitment to clear all the areas affected by mines. In this respect, my delegation believes it to be very important that some of the objectives of the United Nations five-year Mine Action Strategy, and any other strategies developed by the Organization, should be to deal with the reservations expressed by several Member States regarding the provisions of the Convention and to conclude an additional protocol to deal with aspects of security and with old and new landmines and their harm to man and property.

Mr. Fall (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I am delighted to see my dear friend once again in the presidential seat just as I take the floor. On behalf of the delegation of Senegal, I wish to express gratitude to you for your wise initiative in having today's discussion focus on assistance in mine action. At the same time I convey congratulations to the Secretary-General on his highly relevant report which talks of clear progress in attaining the objectives of the United Nations Mine Action Strategy 2001-2005. This progress is shown in the great improvement in the Electronic Mine Information Network, the development of a rapid response plan to deal with emergency situations and the increased adaptation of international standards in the area of mine action.

The serious human and economic toll that has resulted from this terrible scourge shocks us and poses an ongoing challenge to the international community. When we look at the figures, which are nonetheless deemed to be optimistic, we are confronted with a

wrenching fact — there are between 60-70 million landmines buried in some 90 countries in the world, disabling someone every 22 minutes with an annual total of 26,000 people who are maimed. In addition to the serious physical and psychological damage caused, these devices kill innocent civilians, destroy the economies of many societies and threaten for the long term the security of areas where they proliferate. This is a grim picture in which, unfortunately, here too, Africa is the most affected continent.

Mr. Kofi Annan was right when he stated in April 1999:

> "From my experience in peacekeeping, I have seen first-hand the literally crippling effects of landmines and unexploded ordnance on people and communities alike. Not only do these abominable weapons lie buried in silence and in their millions, waiting to kill or maim innocent women and children; but the presence — or even the fear of the presence — of a single landmine can prevent the cultivation of an entire field, or rob a whole village of its livelihood, place yet another obstacle on a country's road to reconstruction and development."

So when they adopted the New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development, African leaders obviously did not lose sight of the crucial role of promoting peace and security on the continent through the relevant resolutions of the Organization for African Unity/African Union on the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa and the anti-personnel mine problem, particularly since, in this new crusade or jihad for the progress of our people, all resources, particularly human resources, must be fully and effectively mobilized.

That is why, in consonance with what the United Nations is doing, Senegal would recall that all mine action must be part of this five-fold initiative which is so familiar: assistance and rehabilitation of victims, mine awareness and education on risk reduction, rendering effective areas secured, destruction of stockpiles and universalization of the campaign through the Ottawa Convention.

One of the top priorities for the international community is to provide high-quality assistance to the mine-disabled through the provision of medical and orthopaedic services. In order to help the disabled and their families, we must develop a proactive economic and social reintegration policy to provide them moral support and to enable them to escape the debilitating state of dependency, so that they can become, or resume being, active and dynamic agents of development in their region or their country.

Secondly, education — through the launching of robust anti-mine campaigns, for instance — remains crucial.

We should urge States to meet their international obligations — a point that was made earlier by Libya. They should be urged to continue and to redouble their efforts to finance awareness campaigns, to train local deminers and to promote civilian demining and so-called proximity demining, so that the decontamination of areas can be carried out from the perspective of promoting development for peoples in distress.

Individuals living in mine-infested areas should be provided with extensive information about the dangers posed by mines and consequently should adapt their behaviour to the new requirements of their area. This can be accomplished through the implementation of educational programmes on the prevention of mine accidents.

Equally important is the third aspect of mine action, in which priority is given to mine clearance and to making mine-infested environments more secure in countries emerging from conflict. This requires the full participation of donors and of beneficiaries. Let me cite as examples, in the region of the Economic Community of West African States, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and Liberia, which require special attention and assistance from the international community.

Together with the promoters of international campaigns to achieve a mine-free planet, Senegal endorses the following priorities: the integration by development partners of the scourge of "mine pollution" in their aid and cooperation policies; and the creation of a permanent fund for mine clearance, supported by mandatory contributions and aimed at financing community programmes.

Fourthly, there is a clear decline in the international production, sale and transfer of anti-personnel landmines, so the priorities here must include, now more than ever before, the systematic destruction of stockpiles as well as the mapping and marking of minefields, in keeping with new norms of international law emanating from the United Nations.

Given the fact that the number of stockpiled mines far exceeds the number of those actually laid, the United Nations is encouraged to step up its efforts to assist targeted countries by providing more effective management of stockpile-destruction programmes, which should be completed within the four years following the entry into force of the Convention — that is to say, in principle, before the deadline of 1 March 2003, which, unfortunately, appears to be nearly impossible to meet.

Last but not least, the fifth aspect of mine action involves the need to meet the primary challenge of the universalization of a ban, through the Ottawa process, that sets a new international standard against the use of mines. This legal norm should be adopted by all States, including those that have not yet acceded to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

That Convention, which was signed on 3 December 1997 in Ottawa by some 144 States, entered into force on 1 March 1999 following ratification by Burkina Faso. Today it has been ratified by about 130 countries and has become a kind of reference point that should gradually be adopted by all States that are determined to abide by this new international standard, which is not an exhaustive one but does set an example. It is not sufficient, but it is important for more than one reason.

Because States parties are obliged to adopt national legislation and to submit period reports, the credibility of this legal instrument depends on the political will of States to comply without delay with the required confidence-building, transparency and control measures, which will require increased technical and financial assistance on the part of the donors.

Here we would stress the importance of the United Nations Mine Action Strategy for 2001-2005, which we believe should be viewed in the context of a larger strategy for peace-building and for the reconstruction of the social and economic infrastructures of the affected countries.

Senegal solemnly appeals to the international community to provide the necessary financial and technical assistance to the affected countries, in order to help them develop their national capacities to respond to the requirements of mine victims in terms of care, rehabilitation and socio-economic reintegration.

We encourage the World Health Organization, in cooperation with the relevant organizations, to fine-tune its intervention strategy in the affected areas and to propose that specific measures be mainstreamed into public-health policies not only for mine victims but for all communities living in areas affected by this deadly scourge.

Senegal welcomes the commitment made by Canada and the European Union to pool their efforts to increase global resources for demining activities, to set up an information centre on mine-clearance technologies and to create a global network to promote and make available mine-clearance technologies, particularly for African countries and their subregional organizations, at affordable prices.

That is why the momentum created by the Ottawa process must be maintained, strengthened and increased, because that process identified the clear link between the socio-economic, health and development aspects of mine action. This new standard must now stigmatize the significant number of States that take refuge behind contrived arguments to mask their reluctance to give up military and commercial practices that today have become totally unacceptable.

Speaking about recalcitrant States, Nobel Prize winner Jody Williams rightly stated with indignation:

> "It is time to put words into action. The civilian victims of landmines are tired of being told excuses. They are tired of being told that this nation has unique circumstances, that that nation has special security requirements. They are tired of being told that they must wait until this nation develops alternatives, or wait until that nation's neighbour has joined the ban. These are excuses, not justifications, and the excuses are costing lives and limbs every day."

In conclusion, I would like to share Senegal's vision of a world free from mines as a result of joint action, led and coordinated by the United Nations, among populations, States, development partners and the family of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, chief among them the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and Handicap International.

There is a wise old saying in my country that man is the remedy for man. Let us ardently hope that, in regions that are still ravaged and torn apart by mines, we will soon see a new day dawn — a joyful day in which all can work together with determination and in harmony and peace for the full development of the great human brotherhood.

Ms. Costa (United States of America): The United States is a strong supporter of humanitarian mine action. We were among the sponsors of last year's resolution on assistance in mine action and look forward to negotiating this year's draft resolution with a view to sponsorship once again.

Since 1993, the United States has dedicated over $600 million to humanitarian mine action and will provide approximately $100 million more in 2003 to 43 countries. We are pleased that concerted effort by mine-affected countries, as well as donor Governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and civil society, has resulted in significant progress towards a mine-safe world.

Since 1988, when the United States first engaged in humanitarian demining in Afghanistan, we have expanded our humanitarian mine-action assistance to more than 40 countries. We are helping to demine the most dangerous minefields, train humanitarian deminers and provide medical assistance and vocational training to survivors of landmine incidents and their families. We are teaching children and their parents to identify and avoid the threat of landmines, and we are also conducting research and development into new technologies to detect and clear landmines more safely, quickly and efficiently.

The Leahy War Victims Fund of the Agency for International Development, together with the United States Department of Education and the Centers for Disease Control, are providing vocational, psychological and medical assistance, including prosthetic devices, for survivors of landmine accidents in a dozen countries. The Department of Defense performs research to identify new techniques for mine detection and clearance. Taken together with other donor Governments, these efforts have resulted in significant successes over the years.

The United States believes that we can most effectively help mine-affected countries by supporting sustainable, indigenous programmes. Thus we have established most of our programmes on a bilateral basis. We recognize the important role the United Nations system plays, however, in meeting this international challenge. We are proud of our work with the United Nations system to help achieve those results and we salute the leadership of the United Nations Mine Action Service, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Office for Project Services and the World Health Organization in their vital contributions to a mine-safe world. We are also helping to strengthen mine-action centres abroad.

In order to accelerate the elimination of persistent landmines and to provide assistance to survivors of landmine accidents, the United States has forged more than 30 public-private partnerships to augment Government resources. Partnerships have added a dynamic element to mine action, and we have contributed our resources in a way that leverages private donor contributions. The Adopt-A-Minefield programme of the United Nations Association of the United States of America, for example, works with the United Nations and the United Nations Foundation to help demine Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Croatia, Mozambique and Viet Nam. To date, over $5 million has been raised and 100 minefields demined. Adopt-A-Minefield programmes have also been created in the United Kingdom, Canada and Sweden.

The United States is active in the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, being a strong supporter of the Amended Protocol on mines and a proponent of expanding the scope of that Protocol to include anti-vehicle, as well as anti-personnel mines. The United States has destroyed more than 3.3 million of its own landmines and has had a transfer ban in place since 1993.

We are proud of these efforts and the progress that has resulted when Governments, international agencies and private groups work together towards a mine-safe world. The United States is committed to supporting public and private efforts for mine action and is grateful for the increased cooperation that has emerged over the past decade in tackling this tremendous problem. We owe our fellow human beings nothing less than the right to walk the earth in safety.

Ms. Saiga (Japan): It is important for us to work together to create a world free from the threat of landmines, and the Government of Japan has been

advocating a "zero-victim" initiative to this end. In pursuing our common goal in this area, Japan regards it as essential that a comprehensive approach be established, based on the two main strategies of realizing a universal and effective ban on landmines on the one hand and strengthening assistance in mine action, including mine clearance, mine awareness and victim assistance, on the other.

Allow me to take this opportunity to refer to some of the efforts the Government of Japan has been making in the field of mine action.

In order to achieve the common goal of zero victims, the Government of Japan pledged a financial contribution of 10 billion yen — approximately $90 million — for the five-year period beginning in 1998. By October this year, two months short of that five-year period, Japan had fulfilled its pledge and actually gone somewhat beyond the target figure. So far, it has provided assistance to 25 affected countries and areas — among them Cambodia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Angola, Mozambique and Nicaragua — to support their mine-action activities, which have involved mine clearance, victim assistance and mine-awareness education. And it has contributed approximately $17 million to the United Nations Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action, managed by the United Nations Mine Action Service. The forms that Japanese assistance has taken include providing mine-clearance equipment, dispatching experts to mine-affected countries and supporting the landmine-related work of non-governmental organizations through grants.

Here, let me focus on the assistance recently provided by Japan in Afghanistan as an example of our efforts. In January 2002, in the hope of helping to alleviate the plight of refugees and displaced persons in that country, the Government of Japan donated $19.2 million to United Nations organizations and other bodies for mine-action activities. In October this year, Japan decided to extend another grant of $4.8 million to the United Nations Development Programme, the Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan and the United Nations Office for Project Services for their mine-action projects in Afghanistan. It goes without saying that Japan spares no effort in victim assistance, including providing artificial limbs for landmine victims and supporting them through the process of rehabilitation and socio-economic reintegration. The Government of Japan sincerely hopes that these contributions will facilitate the long-term stability and development of Afghanistan.

While much has been achieved in the activities of the international community in the area of mine action, there are still a very large number of mines remaining and the total number of mine victims continues to increase. The Government of Japan is of the view that mine-action activities should be conducted as effectively and efficiently as possible to expedite the solution of this problem. For this purpose, it is desirable to take a systematic approach. It would be useful if the United Nations mine action-related agencies could develop a standardized system to monitor the progress of mine-action programmes and a mechanism to gather and disseminate information on lessons learned by mine-affected countries.

Japan also considers coordinated and concerted efforts by the international community to be very important. In this connection, Japan has recently been appointed to be co-Rapporteur, with Cambodia, of the Standing Committee on Mine Clearance, Mine Awareness and Mine Action Technologies in the Intersessional Work Programme of the Ottawa Convention. We hope to facilitate the discussion in this field and to further promote international cooperation in mine action.

In conclusion, the Government of Japan reaffirms its determination to work hard towards the solution of landmine problems in the hope that one day we will really achieve our goal of zero victims and that the people of the world will talk about landmines and the tragedies they caused as things of the past.

Mr. Hynes (Canada): 3 December will mark five years since the Ottawa Convention was opened for signature. In that time, great strides have been made in addressing the humanitarian challenges presented by the global landmines crisis. Vast tracts of mined land have been cleared; significant resources have been mobilized for assistance to victims; stockpiles of anti-personnel mines have been destroyed at impressive rates; transfers of these weapons have virtually ceased; and there has been a significant drop in global production and use of anti-personnel mines.

But more — much more — remains to be done. Demining efforts continue in more than 70 countries, with many others in need of similar programmes. More than 200 million mines remain in the stockpiles of more than 90 countries. This year, as we have heard

this morning, two United Nations Member States have engaged in large-scale mine-laying operations, while some others continued to use mines in smaller deployments. Fourteen States are still officially producers of these weapons. Against this background, victims of landmines numbered 15,000 to 20,000 last year.

So the urgent humanitarian imperative remains, as does the political imperative of securing ever-increasing and ultimately universal acceptance of the norms of the Ottawa Convention.

The United Nations has been an essential partner in the work undertaken to date and it has a crucial, central role in facing the challenges ahead. Last year at this time, the Assembly considered and endorsed a strategy that provided a comprehensive, detailed road map for setting directions and gauging progress in mine-action activities of the United Nations system over a five-year period. The report before us today documents an impressive record of achievement in the first year of implementing that plan. Of the 42 specific objectives contained in that strategy, fully 15 were targeted for completion in 2002. All of these have either been or are well on the way to being attained. Canada extends its appreciation and congratulations to the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and all other partner agencies for the leadership and effectiveness they have demonstrated in mounting mine-action programmes in several complex emergencies, addressing mine-risk education and victim assistance needs and in assisting Governments and civil society to establish the requisite capacities to fulfil such tasks over the long term.

We have been particularly impressed with the efforts made by UNMAS and all relevant United Nations agencies to improve coordination and teamwork among themselves and with their governmental and non-governmental partners. We strongly encourage continued attention to this task. With significantly increased operational demands arising in such countries as Afghanistan and Angola, it is painfully evident that the humanitarian and development aims of mine action can be realized only if the international community pulls effectively together. Next year's review of the five-year strategy offers an important opportunity for further strengthening the coherence and the impact of our collective efforts.

Continued efforts are required in all regions, but I would like today to briefly mention the challenge in the most mine-affected continent of all — Africa. The security and development needs of Africa were a particular focus of this year's G8 summit in Kananaskis, Canada. At that meeting, G8 leaders conferred with African leaders and adopted a comprehensive plan of action for enhanced partnerships to promote stability and sustained development on the African continent. The Africa Action Plan included a specific commitment to assist African countries in eliminating and removing landmines, and we have now embarked on a process of consultations with G8 partners with a view to making good on that commitment. This process will include consultations with African partners, other major donors and international institutions, including the United Nations.

One key to ensuring progress — and this is a factor that has been mentioned this morning and applies in all regions — will be for the concerned African countries themselves to recognize and communicate clearly the crucial role that mine action must play as a priority in their overall development plans. They must also recognize that, beyond the individual human tragedy wrought by these indiscriminate weapons, their use and their presence in many situations presents a major obstacle to post-conflict recovery, peace and long-term development.

Finally, and in the same vein, Canada believes that it is crucial for the United Nations and its Member States to acknowledge the critical role that mine action has to play in advancing the Organization's broader purposes of peace, security and development in many parts of the world. One way in which that reality can be given concrete recognition is through the dedication of a more appropriate share of regular budget resources to core mine-action operations, such as those of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), in order to reduce the undue reliance of essential overhead operations on voluntary funding.

Clearly, the international donor community bears and will continue to bear a major share of the responsibility for meeting the humanitarian and developmental challenges presented by anti-personnel mines. But that responsibility can be effectively discharged only in true partnership with mine-affected Governments, with relevant international institutions and with non-governmental actors. In closing, I should

like to reaffirm that Canada remains committed to full and active participation in this crucial undertaking.

Mr. Kirn (Slovenia): Slovenia associates itself with the statement made earlier by the representative of Denmark on behalf of the European Union. In addition, I should like to add a few points on behalf of my Government.

First of all, I should like to join previous speakers in commending the Secretary-General for his report on assistance in mine action (A/57/430). The report duly reflects the strategic goals and objectives in that area as well as the current situation on the ground with regard to their implementation. The mine-action strategy of the United Nations should remain transparent, straightforward and unsophisticated in order to match the very unsophisticated nature of the anti-personnel landmines that the strategy is essentially aimed at combating.

Next month, it will have been five years since the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production, and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (Mine Ban Convention) was adopted. States parties to that Convention have assumed obligations to destroy landmine stocks, to clear mine areas and to provide resources for mine awareness and victim assistance programmes. In addition to full implementation of those commitments, we must call for universalization of the Mine Ban Convention. Our deliberations today should echo and uphold the message contained in the mine-action strategy of the United Nations: a call for renewed political commitment to sustained mine action worldwide. Sustained efforts are needed, both on the part of States parties to the Ottawa Convention, to meet their obligations, and on the part of the international community, to ensure continued assistance, particularly to mine-affected countries, in meeting their obligations and commitments. Those efforts for global mine action may well be threatened if they are not supported by much-needed renewed and unequivocal political commitment, particularly to surmount donor fatigue with regard to mine clearance.

As stated in the report of the Secretary-General, important lessons in mine action can be learned where progress can be measured against clear objectives. Slovenia fully subscribes to that statement. By establishing the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance (ITF) four years ago, Slovenia set out clear objectives in the field of mine action: to remove the red dots — representing mine fields — on the map in the region of South-Eastern Europe and to assist mine victims. To date, 31.4 million square meters have been demined in South-Eastern Europe and close to 700 mine victims have been rehabilitated. Apart from its efficiency and transparency, among the ITF's most visible achievements are a low overhead cost of 3 per cent and a low demining cost per square metre of $1.70. That is why the ITF has also been successful in defying donor fatigue: it has succeeded in raising $102 million in four years. United States donations have made up half of that amount, and the European Union has also been an important donor, along with 24 other donor countries.

After its early success in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the ITF embraced a broader regional role in South-Eastern Europe that also encourages regional cooperation, which is of the utmost humanitarian importance and of political significance in the process of post-conflict rehabilitation. Thus, the ITF became a focal point of the South-Eastern Europe Mine Action Coordination Council, which also meets the objectives outlined in the mine-action strategy of the United Nations. That strategy, inter alia, highlights the importance of lessons learned in mine action. Slovenia believes that our future assistance and support with respect to mine action should also stem from lessons learned in implementing national and regional approaches. That is why the Slovenia-based ITF has also offered its expertise to countries in need outside the South-Eastern European region — namely, in the Caucasus.

In order to ensure sustainability in mine action, it would be worthwhile to provide an opportunity within the United Nations framework to share experiences and lessons learned thus far in the whole spectrum of mine action. We believe that that opportunity should also be provided in the context of the New York-based Mine Action Support Group, which Slovenia joined recently.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the representative of Israel, who wishes to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that, in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Shacham (Israel): I am taking the floor today in order to briefly clarify certain inaccuracies in the statement made today by the representative of Lebanon.

On 24 May 2000, Israeli forces completely withdrew from southern Lebanon, in full and confirmed compliance with United Nations Security Council resolution 425 (1978). Five days later, on 29 May, Israel Defence Forces liaison officers held a series of meetings with the senior command of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and transferred detailed maps previously used by the Israel Defence Forces indicating the location in southern Lebanon of mine fields and areas suspected of containing mines and other explosive devices. That also included all information regarding mines or other explosive devices planted by other elements operating in the area. Upon receiving the Israeli maps and files, UNIFIL's senior command signed official confirmations of the transfer of that information.

As is widely known, southern Lebanon has served as a breeding ground for terrorist activities for many years in violation of international law, including Security Council resolution 1373 (2001). Throughout this period, large quantities of mines, booby traps and other devices have been laid by terrorist groups and by individual terrorists. Those mines and explosive devices have never been marked, mapped or reported, nor have the areas been fenced off in order to avoid civilian casualties. Today, those mines and booby traps continue to pose a serious threat to the population of southern Lebanon.

Pursuant to Security Council resolution 425 (1978), and in accordance with international law, it is the responsibility of the Government of Lebanon to establish effective control and authority in the area and restore international peace and security to southern Lebanon. Clearly, the failure to fulfil these responsibilities, with respect, inter alia, to minefields, endangers the civilian population in that area.

Israel remains willing to assist should any further clarifications be required with regard to the information it has transferred. Indeed, Israel's willingness to cooperate in mine clearance has already been demonstrated elsewhere in the world. During the years 1995 to 2001, Israel, in conjunction with the United Nations Children's Fund, conducted a mine awareness project in Angola that aimed to educate the local population as to the hazards of mines. Additionally, Israel conducted a joint mine clearance project with Jordan in the Aravah Valley in order to enable the agricultural utilization of that area. Similarly, Israel, Jordan, Canada and Norway joined in a project aimed at Jordan Valley mine clearance and medical rehabilitation for Jordanian mine victims.

Where there is goodwill and a willingness to cooperate, much good can be accomplished in the area of mine clearance. However, when these are absent, the result is a perpetuation of the threat to the well being of innocent civilians.

Mr. Assaf (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): The representative of Israel did not want this meeting to conclude without making more mischaracterizations. He said that I made inaccurate allegations in my statement. Mr. President, allow me to respond to the representative of Israel.

He has just raised a number of issues that I did not mention in my statement. In the discipline of logic, this is known as "anticipation". Instead of addressing the core issue, the representative of Israel jumped to other issues, thus creating a distraction from the main subject.

Regarding resolution 425 (1978) and the withdrawal from southern Lebanon, we describe Israel as "the lazy student" who fails in his academic performance and whose marks range between zero and one on a scale of twenty. He then might achieve a three out of twenty and claim as a result that he has scored a high mark. The level of the mark is relative to his previous performance.

Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon is not adequate. Israel has to fulfil many other decisions and to withdraw from the remaining areas of southern Lebanon. I will not go into more detail on this, but I need to respond briefly to the remarks made by the Israeli representative regarding mine action.

He said that Israeli Defence Forces liaison officers met on 29 May with the senior command of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and that they handed to them "all information regarding mines". That is precisely what the Israeli representative said. I will not answer him in my own words. Instead, I will quote the Secretary-General, who said in paragraph 16 of his report, document S/2002/746, issued on 12 July 2002: "On 30 April, Israel handed over to UNIFIL

supplementary data on minefields in south Lebanon". I have just read the Secretary-General's words verbatim.

Mr. President, on 30 April 2002, Israel submitted information on "some" mines in southern Lebanon, not "all information regarding mines". The Israeli representative claims that, on 29 May, Israel transferred all information regarding landmines. In plain language, this is untruthful. This is imprecise language. I wish that the Israeli representative had checked and verified his facts before taking the floor.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the representative of Israel who wishes to speak a second time in exercise of the right of reply. Such statements should be limited to five minutes and be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Shacham (Israel): I am bewildered by the second Lebanese statement.

Two and a half years ago, a radical change occurred on the Israeli-Lebanese border. As I have already mentioned, Israel has withdrawn from Lebanon, fulfilling its responsibilities under resolution 425 (1978).

The Secretary-General confirmed this withdrawal in his report to the Security Council. The Security Council endorsed this report, and Security Council resolution 1310 (2000) was based on this new reality.

Why then does the representative of Lebanon continue to express his anger and frustration over the occupation of his country and the violation of its sovereignty as if nothing had happened? Could it be that these Lebanese sentiments have very little to do with Israel or its actions?

Israel has never harboured any aspirations towards Lebanese territory or its resources and has always taken action with the sole purpose of maintaining security along its northern border and providing for its own defence. Perhaps these Lebanese feelings could be explained by the fact that there is another State neighbouring Lebanon that occupies its soil and violates its sovereignty.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the representative of Lebanon who wishes to speak a second time in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind delegates that this second reply is limited to five minutes.

Mr. Assaf (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): As I indicated in my first intervention, this is not the subject under discussion. We did not say anything to prompt this Israeli reaction, because he has no sense of shame. I have just stated that he is lying. I have corroborated that by citing the Secretary-General's report. He stated falsehoods. Why did he not respond to my remarks? I raised those points, and he said that Israel had submitted "all" maps, while I stated that the Secretary-General himself admitted that Israel had not submitted all maps. Why did he not respond to that point? Why did he speak of other issues that are not under discussion at this meeting? As I have said, in the discipline of logic, that is known as "anticipation" — jumping ahead. His arguments are weak. He feels no shame about not stating the truth. The Israeli representative lacks decency. He should have remained silent.

Programme of work

The President in the Chair.

The President: I would like to inform members that document A/INF/57/3/Rev.2 containing a revised programme of work and schedule of meetings for the main part of the fifty-seventh session was issued this morning.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.

United Nations A/57/PV.52

General Assembly
Fifty-seventh session

Official Records

52nd plenary meeting
Tuesday, 19 November 2002, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kavan ..... (Czech Republic)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Santa Clara Gomes (Portugal), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Reports of the Sixth Committee

The Acting President: The General Assembly will consider the reports of the Sixth Committee on agenda items 152 to 166 and 22 (h).

I request the Rapporteur of the Sixth Committee, Mr. Karim Medrek of Morocco, to introduce in one intervention the reports of the Sixth Committee before the General Assembly.

Mr. Medrek (Morocco), Rapporteur of the Sixth Committee, (*spoke in French*): I have the honour today of introducing to the General Assembly the reports of the Sixth Committee on the 16 agenda items allocated to it: items 152 to 166 and sub-item 22 (h).

I call the Assembly's attention to agenda item 152, entitled "Status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts". The relevant report of the Sixth Committee on this item is contained in document A/57/559. The Committee recommends to the Assembly for adoption the draft resolution contained in paragraph 8 thereof.

Under the terms of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would in particular appeal to all States parties to the Geneva Conventions that have not yet done so to consider becoming parties to the additional Protocols at the earliest possible date. It calls upon all States that are already parties to Protocol I, or those States not parties, on becoming parties to Protocol I, to make the declaration provided for under article 90 of that Protocol. It also calls upon all States that have not yet done so to consider becoming parties to the 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and the two Protocols thereto, and to other relevant treaties on international humanitarian law relating to the protection of victims of armed conflict.

The Sixth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. It is hoped that the Assembly will do the same.

I now turn to agenda item 153, entitled "Consideration of effective measures to enhance the protection, security and safety of diplomatic and consular missions and representatives". The relevant report of the Sixth Committee is contained in document A/57/560. The draft resolution that the Committee recommends to the General Assembly for adoption is contained in paragraph 7 of that report.

Under the terms of the draft resolution, the Assembly would, among other things, strongly condemn acts of violence against diplomatic and consular missions and representatives, as well as against missions, representatives and staff of non-governmental organizations. It would also urge States to take every necessary measure at the national and international levels to prevent such acts of violence and to ensure, with the participation of the United Nations

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as appropriate, that such acts are fully investigated in order to bring offenders to justice. The Sixth Committee adopted that draft resolution without a vote. The Assembly may wish to do the same.

I would now like to draw the Assembly's attention to agenda item 154, entitled "Convention on jurisdictional immunities of States and their property". The relevant report of the Committee is contained in document A/57/561. The draft resolution that the Committee recommends to the General Assembly for adoption is contained in paragraph 7 of that report.

Under the terms of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would decide that the Ad Hoc Committee on Jurisdictional Immunities of States and Their Property, which was established by resolution 55/150, of 12 December 2000, shall be convened from 24 to 28 February 2003 to make a final attempt at consolidating areas of agreement and resolving outstanding issues, with a view to elaborating a generally acceptable instrument based on the draft articles on jurisdictional immunities of States and their property and on the discussions in the Sixth Committee, as well as to recommend a form for the instrument. The Assembly would also request the Ad Hoc Committee to report to it on the outcome of its work at its fifty-eighth session. The Sixth Committee adopted that draft resolution without a vote. I hope that the Assembly will be in a position to do the same.

I now turn to agenda item 155, entitled "Report of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law on the work of its thirty-fifth session". The relevant report of the Sixth Committee on this agenda item is contained in document A/57/562. In paragraph 15 of that report, the Committee recommends four draft resolutions for adoption by the General Assembly.

Under the terms of the first draft resolution, entitled "Report of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law on the work of its thirty-fifth session", the General Assembly would, among other things, take note of the report of the Commission on its thirty-fifth session. It would also reaffirm the importance, in particular for developing countries, of the work of the Commission concerned with training and technical assistance in the field of international trade law. The Assembly would also appeal to Governments, the relevant bodies of the United Nations system, organizations, institutions and individuals to support such assistance programmes by the Commission, in particular by making voluntary contributions to the Commission's Trust Fund for Symposia, as well as by providing contributions to the trust fund established to provide travel assistance for developing countries that are members of the Commission. The Assembly would also decide to continue, in the competent Main Committee, its consideration of granting travel assistance to the least developed countries that are members of the Commission, in order to ensure full participation by all Member States in the sessions of the Commission and its working groups.

Under the terms of the operative paragraphs of the second draft resolution, entitled "Model Law on International Commercial Conciliation of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law", the General Assembly would express appreciation to the Commission for completing and adopting the Model Law on International Commercial Conciliation, which is contained in the annex to the draft resolution, as well as for preparing the Guide to Enactment and Use of the Model Law. The Assembly would also request the Secretary-General to make every effort to ensure that the Model Law, together with its Guide, become generally known and available to all. Finally, the Assembly would recommend that all States give due consideration to incorporating the Model Law into their national laws.

Under the terms of the operative part of the third draft resolution, entitled "Enhancing coordination in the area of international trade law and strengthening the secretariat of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law", the General Assembly would emphasize the need for higher priority to be given to the work of the Commission. The Assembly would also take note of the fifteenth recommendation contained in the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the in-depth evaluation of the programme on legal affairs. It would also request the Secretary-General to consider measures to strengthen the secretariat of the Commission within the bounds of the resources available to the Organization, if possible during the current biennium, and in any case during the 2004-2005 biennium.

Finally, under the terms of the operative paragraphs of the fourth draft resolution, entitled "Enlargement of the membership of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law", the General Assembly would enlarge the membership of the

Commission from 36 to 60 States, with the following distribution of seats among regional groups: 14 seats to the Group of African States, 14 seats to the Group of Asian States, 8 seats to the Group of Eastern European States, 10 seats to the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States and 14 seats to the Group of Western European and other States. In increasing the Commission's membership, the Assembly would bear in mind the fact that the Commission is a technical body whose composition reflects the specific requirements of the subject matter. Therefore, the regional representation resulting from the increase in membership would not be a precedent for the enlargement of other bodies of the United Nations system. The Assembly would also decide that the 24 additional members would be elected for a term of six years, except as otherwise provided by the draft resolution. The 24 additional members of the Commission would be elected during the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, and would take office on the first day of the thirty-seventh session of the Commission, in 2004.

The Sixth Committee adopted those four draft resolutions without a vote. It is the hope of the Committee that the Assembly will do the same.

I now turn to agenda item 156, entitled "Report of the International Law Commission on the work of its fifty-fourth session". The relevant report of the Sixth Committee is contained in document A/57/563. The draft resolution recommended to the General Assembly for adoption is contained in paragraph 8 of that report.

By the draft resolution, the General Assembly would, inter alia, take note with appreciation of the report of the International Law Commission on the work of its fifty-fourth session. It would also take note of the decision of the Commission to proceed with its work on the topic "International liability for injurious consequences arising out of acts not prohibited by international law", as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 56/82 of 12 December 2001, and of its decision to include in its programme of work the following topics: "Responsibility of international organizations", "Shared natural resources" and "Fragmentation of international law: difficulties arising from the diversification and expansion of international law".

The General Assembly would reiterate its invitation to Governments to provide information to the Commission regarding State practice on the topic "Unilateral acts of States" and to submit the most relevant national legislation and decisions of domestic courts relevant to diplomatic protection in order to assist the Commission in its work on these topics. The General Assembly would also invite the International Law Commission to continue taking measures to enhance its efficiency and productivity and would encourage the Commission to continue taking cost-saving measures at its future sessions. The General Assembly would further decide that the next session of the International Law Commission shall be held at the United Nations Office at Geneva from 5 May to 6 June and from 7 July to 8 August 2003.

The draft resolution was adopted without a vote. It is hoped that the General Assembly will do likewise.

I now turn to agenda item 157, "Report of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country". The report of the Sixth Committee on this item is contained in document A/57/564 and corrigendum 1. The draft resolution recommended to the Assembly for adoption is contained in paragraph 8 of the report.

Under the terms of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would, inter alia, endorse recommendations and conclusions of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country. It would also express the view that the maintenance of appropriate conditions for the normal work of the delegations and the missions accredited to the United Nations and the observance of their privileges and immunities is an issue of great importance, and request the host country to continue to solve, through negotiations, problems that might arise, and to take all measures necessary to prevent any interference with the functioning of missions.

Moreover, the Assembly would take note of the opinion of the Legal Counsel of the United Nations concerning the Parking Programme for Diplomatic Vehicles; the positions expressed on this issue at the 213th meeting of the Committee, including requests from most speakers to defer implementation of the Parking Programme; and the host country's commitment to maintaining appropriate conditions for the functioning of the delegations and missions accredited to the United Nations in a manner that is fair, non-discriminatory, efficient and consistent with international law.

The Assembly would express its appreciation for the efforts made by the host country, and hope that the

issues raised at the meetings of the Committee will continue to be resolved in a spirit of cooperation and in accordance with international law. Moreover, it would note that during the reporting period the travel controls previously imposed by the host country on staff of certain missions and staff members of the Secretariat of certain nationalities remained in effect, and request the host country to consider removing such travel controls.

The Assembly would also note that the Committee anticipates that the host country will continue to ensure the issuance, in a timely manner, of entry visas to representatives of Member States, in accordance with applicable agreements, for the purpose of their attending official United Nations meetings.

The Sixth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. It is hoped that the Assembly will be in a position to act likewise.

I now turn to the report of the Sixth Committee concerning agenda item 158, "Establishment of the International Criminal Court". The report is contained in document A/57/565. The draft resolution recommended to the General Assembly is contained in paragraph 10 of the report.

Under the terms of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would, inter alia, call upon all States that have signed the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court to consider ratifying it or acceding to it without delay, and to becoming parties to the Agreement on the Privileges and Immunities of the International Criminal Court. The Assembly would also welcome the important work accomplished by the Preparatory Commission for the International Criminal Court in the completion of its mandate, and the holding of the first session of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute.

In addition, the Assembly would take note of the report of the Secretary-General on the establishment of the International Criminal Court, in particular the indication that the Assembly of States Parties would, inter alia, resume its first session from 3 to 7 February and from 21 to 23 April 2003 and hold its second session from 8 to 12 September 2003; and that the Committee on Budget and Finance would meet from 4 to 8 August 2003. Furthermore, the General Assembly would request the Secretary-General to undertake the preparations necessary for holding the meetings and to make Secretariat services available to those meetings. The Assembly would further request the Secretary-General to expand the mandate of the trust fund established pursuant to its resolution 51/207 for voluntary contributions towards meeting the costs of participation of the least developed countries in the work of the Assembly of States Parties.

The Sixth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote and the Assembly may wish to do likewise.

I now draw the Assembly's attention to agenda item 159, "Report of the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization". The report of the Sixth Committee on this item is contained in document A/57/566. The Sixth Committee recommends for adoption by the General Assembly three draft resolutions, which are contained in paragraph 12 of the report.

By the terms of draft resolution I, entitled "Report of the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization", the General Assembly would, inter alia, request the Special Committee, at its next session from 7 to 17 April 2003, to continue its consideration of all proposals concerning the question of the maintenance of international peace and security in all its aspects in order to strengthen the role of the United Nations. The Special Committee would also be requested to continue to consider, on a priority basis, the question of the implementation of the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations related to assistance to third States affected by the application of sanctions under Chapter VII of the Charter by commencing a substantive debate on all of the related reports of the Secretary-General and the proposals submitted on the question.

By the provisions of draft resolution II, entitled "Implementation of the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations related to assistance to third States affected by the application of sanctions", the General Assembly would, inter alia, renew its invitation to the Security Council to consider the establishment of further mechanisms or procedures, as appropriate, for consultations as early as possible under Article 50 of the Charter with third States affected by the application of sanctions under Chapter VII. Moreover, it would invite the Council, its sanctions committees and the Secretariat to take a number of measures including, inter alia, to continue to ensure, as appropriate, that

pre-assessment and ongoing assessment reports contain analyses on the impact of sanctions on third States and on how their negative effects could be mitigated.

Furthermore, the General Assembly would welcome the report of the Secretary-General containing a summary of the deliberations and main findings of the ad hoc expert group meeting in 1998 and would take note of the Secretary-General's most recent report, and in particular of his views on the deliberations and main findings of that meeting.

In addition, the Assembly would decide to consider, within the Sixth Committee or a working group of the Committee, at its fifty-eighth session, further progress in the elaboration of effective measures aimed at the implementation of the provisions of the Charter related to assistance to third States affected by the application of sanctions.

Under the provisions of draft resolution III, entitled, "Prevention and peaceful settlement of disputes", the General Assembly would urge States to make the most effective use of existing procedures and methods for the prevention and settlement of their disputes peacefully, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and would also draw the attention of States to the important roles played by the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Secretary-General in providing early warning and in working for the prevention of disputes and situations which might threaten international peace and security.

Furthermore, the Assembly would urge the continued enhancement of the concrete steps taken by the Secretariat to build and improve the capacity of the United Nations to respond effectively in matters relating to dispute prevention. It would also request the Secretary-General to take such steps as he deems necessary from time to time to encourage States to designate suitably qualified persons for inclusion in the lists of experts in the various mechanisms for dispute settlement.

The Assembly would also remind States that have not yet done so that they may make a declaration under Article 36, paragraph 2, of the Statute of the International Court of Justice with regard to its compulsory jurisdiction in relation to any other State accepting the same obligation, and would encourage them to consider doing so.

The Sixth Committee adopted these three draft resolutions without a vote and hopes that the Assembly will do the same.

I now come to agenda item 160, entitled "Measures to eliminate international terrorism". The report of the Sixth Committee is contained in document A/57/567. The draft resolution recommended to the General Assembly for adoption is set out in paragraph 10 of that report.

Under the terms of the draft resolution, the Assembly would, inter alia, strongly condemn all acts, methods and practices of terrorism as criminal and unjustifiable, wherever and by whomsoever committed. In addition, the Assembly would urge States that have not yet done so to consider, as a matter of priority and in accordance with Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), becoming parties to the relevant conventions and protocols.

The draft resolution would urge States to cooperate with the Secretary-General and with one another, as well as with interested intergovernmental organizations, with a view to ensuring, where appropriate within existing mandates, that technical and other expert advice is provided to those States requiring and requesting assistance in becoming parties to the conventions and protocols previously referred to. The Assembly would also welcome the efforts of the Terrorism Prevention Branch of the Centre for International Crime Prevention in Vienna to enhance, through its mandate, the capabilities of the United Nations in the prevention of terrorism.

Furthermore, the Assembly would decide that the Ad Hoc Committee established pursuant to resolution 51/210 of 17 December 1996 would continue to elaborate a comprehensive convention on international terrorism as a matter of urgency, and would continue its efforts to resolve the outstanding issues relating to the elaboration of a draft international convention for the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism. The Ad Hoc Committee would also keep on its agenda the question of convening a high-level conference under the auspices of the United Nations to formulate a joint organized response of the international community to terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. The Assembly would further decide that the Ad Hoc Committee would meet from 31 March to 2 April 2003 and that work would also continue, if necessary, during

the fifty-eighth session of the Assembly within the framework of a working group of the Sixth Committee.

The Sixth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. It is hoped that the Assembly will do likewise.

I now turn to the report of the Sixth Committee on agenda item 161, entitled "Scope of legal protection under the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel", contained in document A/57/568 and Corr.1. The draft resolution that the Sixth Committee recommends to the General Assembly for adoption is set out in paragraph 10 of the report.

Under the terms of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would, inter alia, recommend that the Secretary-General continue to seek the inclusion of key provisions of the Convention in future, as well as, if necessary, in existing status-of-forces, status-of-mission and host country agreements, mindful of the importance of the timely conclusion of such agreements. It would also recommend that the Secretary-General advise the Security Council or the General Assembly, as appropriate, where in his assessment circumstances would support a declaration of exceptional risk for the purposes of article 1(c)(ii) of the Convention.

In operative paragraph 5, the General Assembly would confirm the Secretary-General's authority to provide information, on the request of a State, on matters of fact relevant to the application of the Convention.

In operative paragraph 6, the General Assembly would request the Secretary-General to prepare model or standardized provisions for incorporation into the agreements between the United Nations and humanitarian non-governmental organizations or agencies, and if possible to report on progress on this issue before the next meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee established under resolution 56/89. In the same paragraph, the Secretary-General would also be requested to make available to Member States the names of humanitarian non-governmental organizations or agencies that have concluded agreements with the United Nations.

According to operative paragraph 8, the next meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee established under resolution 56/89 would be held from 24 to 28 March 2003. The Ad Hoc Committee's mandate, as set out in the same paragraph, would be to continue the discussion on measures to enhance the existing protective legal regime for United Nations and associated personnel. In operative paragraph 9, the Ad Hoc Committee would be requested to submit a report on its work to the General Assembly at the fifty-eighth session.

Finally, in operative paragraph 10, the General Assembly would request the Secretary-General to report to it at its fifty-eighth session on the measures taken to implement the resolution.

The Sixth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote, and I hope that the Assembly will do likewise.

I now turn to agenda item 162, entitled, "International convention against the reproductive cloning of human beings". The report of the Sixth Committee is contained in document A/57/569. The draft decision recommended to the General Assembly for adoption is found in paragraph 14 of that report.

Under the terms of the draft decision, the Assembly would welcome the reports of the Ad Hoc Committee on an International Convention against the Reproductive Cloning of Human Beings, which met in February and March 2002, as well as of the Working Group of the Sixth Committee established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 56/93 of 12 December 2001, which met in September 2002.

Furthermore, the Assembly would decide to convene a working group of the Sixth Committee during the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly from 29 September to 3 October 2003 in order to continue the work undertaken during the present session of the Assembly. Finally, as is noted in paragraph 12 of the report, the Committee, in adopting the draft decision, decided not to take action on any other proposals. Indeed, the Committee adopted the draft decision without a vote, and it is hoped that the Assembly will do so as well.

I now turn to agenda item 163, "Observer status for the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance in the General Assembly". The relevant report of the Committee is contained in document A/57/570, and the draft decision recommended to the General Assembly for adoption is found in paragraph 8 thereof.

Under the terms of the draft decision, the General Assembly would decide to defer its consideration of and a decision on the request for observer status for the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance in the General Assembly to its fifty-eighth session.

The draft decision was adopted by the Sixth Committee without a vote, and I hope that the Assembly will do the same.

I now draw your attention to agenda item 164 entitled, "Observer status for Partners in Population and Development in the General Assembly". The relevant report of the Committee is contained in document A/57/571, and the draft resolution recommended to the General Assembly for adoption is reproduced in paragraph 7 thereof.

Under the terms of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would decide to invite the Partners in Population and Development to participate in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly in the capacity of observer. It would also request the Secretary-General to take the necessary action to implement the resolution.

The draft resolution was adopted by the Sixth Committee without a vote, and I hope that the Assembly will be in a position to do the same.

I now draw your attention to agenda item 165 entitled, "Observer status for the Asian Development Bank in the General Assembly." The relevant report of the Committee is contained in document A/57/572, and the draft resolution recommended to the General Assembly for adoption is reproduced in paragraph 7 thereof.

Under the terms of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would decide to invite the Asian Development Bank to participate in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly in the capacity of observer. It would also request the Secretary-General to take the necessary action to implement the resolution.

The draft resolution was adopted by the Sixth Committee without a vote, and I hope that the Assembly will be in a position to do the same.

I now turn to agenda item 166 entitled, "Observer status for the International Centre for Migration Policy Development in the General Assembly". The relevant report of the Committee is contained in document A/57/573, and the draft resolution recommended to the General Assembly for adoption is reproduced in paragraph 7 thereof.

Under the terms of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would decide to invite the International Centre for Migration Policy Development to participate in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly in the capacity of observer. It would also request the Secretary-General to take the necessary action to implement the resolution.

The draft resolution was adopted by the Sixth Committee without a vote, and I hope that the Assembly will be in a position to do the same.

I now draw your attention to agenda item 22 (h) entitled, "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union". The relevant report of the Committee is contained in document A/57/574, and the draft resolution recommended to the General Assembly for adoption is reproduced in paragraph 7 thereof.

Under the terms of the draft resolution entitled "Observer status for the Inter-Parliamentary Union in the General Assembly", the General Assembly would decide to invite the Inter-Parliamentary Union to participate in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly in the capacity of observer. It would also request the Secretary-General to take the necessary action to implement the resolution.

The draft resolution was adopted by the Sixth Committee without a vote, and I hope that the Assembly will be in a position to do the same.

I have thus concluded reading out the list of reports of the Sixth Committee now before this Assembly. Allow me to thank all delegations, and in particular those of the regional group to which Morocco belongs and which gave me this great honour to represent them. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my other colleagues in the bureau for their cooperation and cordiality, as well as the Secretary of the Committee and his close associates for the professionalism and great support that they have shown me throughout.

The President: If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the reports of the Sixth Committee which are before the Assembly today.

It was so decided.

Statements will, therefore, be limited to explanations of vote.

The positions of delegations regarding the recommendations of the Sixth Committee have been made clear in the Committee and are reflected in the relevant official records.

May I remind members that under paragraph 7 of decision 34/401, the General Assembly agreed that "When the same draft resolution is considered in a Main Committee and in plenary meeting, a delegation should, as far as possible, explain its vote only once, that is, either in the Committee or in plenary meeting, unless that delegation's vote in plenary meeting is different from its vote in the Committee."

May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to ten minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Before we begin to take action on the recommendations contained in the reports of the Sixth Committee, I should like to advise representatives that we are going to proceed to take decisions in the same manner as was done in the Sixth Committee, unless the Secretariat is notified otherwise in advance.

I should, therefore, hope that we may proceed to adopt without a vote those recommendations that were adopted without a vote in the Sixth Committee.

Agenda item 152

Status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts

Report of the Sixth Committee (A/57/559)

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Sixth Committee in paragraph 8 of its report (A/57/559).

The draft resolution was adopted by the Sixth Committee without a vote. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 57/14).

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 152?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 153

Consideration of effective measures to enhance the protection, security and safety of diplomatic and consular missions and representatives

Report of the Sixth Committee (A/57/560)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Sixth Committee in paragraph 7 of its report.

The Sixth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 57/15).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 153?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 154

Convention on jurisdictional immunities of States and their property

Report of the Sixth Committee (A/57/561)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Sixth Committee in paragraph 7 of its report.

The Sixth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 57/16).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 154?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 155

Report of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law on the work of its thirty-fifth session

Report of the Sixth Committee (A/57/562)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the four draft resolutions recommended by the Sixth Committee in paragraph 15 of its report.

Draft resolution I is entitled "Report of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law on the work of its thirty-fifth session".

The Sixth Committee adopted draft resolution I without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 57/17).

The President: Draft resolution II is entitled "Model Law on International Commercial Conciliation of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law".

The Sixth Committee adopted draft resolution II without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 57/18).

The President: Draft resolution III is entitled "Enhancing coordination in the area of international trade law and strengthening the secretariat of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law".

The Sixth Committee adopted draft resolution III without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 57/19).

The President: Draft resolution IV is entitled "Enlargement of the membership of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law".

The Sixth Committee adopted draft resolution IV without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 57/20).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 155?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 156

Report of the International Law Commission on the work of its fifty-fourth session

Report of the Sixth Committee (A/57/563)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Sixth Committee in paragraph 9 of its report.

The Sixth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 57/21).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 156?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 157

Report of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country

Report of the Sixth Committee (A/57/564 and Corr.1)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Sixth Committee in paragraph 8 of its report.

The Sixth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 57/22).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 157?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 158

Establishment of the International Criminal Court

Report of the Sixth Committee (A/57/565)

The President: I now call on the representative of the United States, who wishes to speak in explanation of position before action is taken on the draft resolution.

Mr. Martinez (United States of America): For the reasons set forth in its statement of 14 October during the consideration of this agenda item by the Sixth Committee, the United States is unable to join in the consensus on the adoption of this draft resolution. We therefore will not participate in the adoption of this draft resolution.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Sixth Committee in paragraph 10 of its report.

The Sixth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 57/23).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 158?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 159

Report of the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization

Report of the Sixth Committee (A/57/566)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the three draft resolutions recommended by the Sixth Committee in paragraph 12 of its report.

We turn first to draft resolution I, entitled "Report of the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization".

The Sixth Committee adopted draft resolution I without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 57/24).

The President: Draft resolution II is entitled "Implementation of the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations related to assistance to third States affected by the application of sanctions".

The Sixth Committee adopted draft resolution II without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 57/25).

The President: Draft resolution III is entitled "Prevention and peaceful settlement of disputes".

The Sixth Committee adopted draft resolution III without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 57/26).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 159?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 160

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Report of the Sixth Committee (A/57/567)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Sixth Committee in paragraph 10 of its report.

The Sixth Committee adopted the draft resolution without at vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 57/27).

The President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 160.

Agenda item 161

Scope of legal protection under the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel

Report of the Sixth Committee (A/57/568 and Corr.1)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Sixth Committee in paragraph 10 of its report.

The Sixth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 57/28).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 161?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 162

International convention against the reproductive cloning of human beings

Report of the Sixth Committee (A/57/569)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft decision recommended by the Sixth Committee in paragraph 14 of its report.

The Sixth Committee adopted the draft decision without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft decision was adopted (decision 57/512).

The President: I give the floor to the representative of the United States, who wishes to speak in explanation of position on the decision just adopted.

Mr. Martinez (United States of America): The United States is pleased to join consensus on this procedural decision, which will enable the Sixth Committee to continue discussion of a convention on cloning during the next session of the General Assembly. We note that subparagraph (b) of the decision sets forth the mandate for the next session in neutral terms. The Working Group will continue the work undertaken during this session, which has focused on the scope of a future convention.

The United States and many other Member States support a total ban on human cloning. We are hopeful that future discussions will advance the work on this topic and enable us to begin work on a convention to ban all cloning of human embryos. Although the item has been re-inscribed on the agenda under its current title, this in no way prejudges the outcome of those discussions, especially since many scientists point out that all cloning that creates human embryos is, in effect, reproductive.

Our focus in these discussions has been and remains the elaboration of a comprehensive ban on human cloning. We believe that the growing support for a total ban signals that a course correction is under way and that the trend towards a total ban will forge a clear path towards a convention to prohibit all cloning of human embryos.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 162?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 163

Observer status for the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance in the General Assembly

Report of the Sixth Committee (A/57/570)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft decision recommended by the Sixth Committee in paragraph 8 of its report.

The Sixth Committee adopted the draft decision without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft decision was adopted (decision 57/513).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 163?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 164

Observer status for Partners in Population and Development in the General Assembly

Report of the Sixth Committee (A/57/571)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Sixth Committee in paragraph 7 of its report.

The Sixth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 57/29).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 164?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 165

Observer status for the Asian Development Bank in the General Assembly

Report of the Sixth Committee (A/57/572)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Sixth Committee in paragraph 7 of its report.

The Sixth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 57/30).

The President: In accordance with the resolution just adopted, I now give the floor to the observer for the Asian Development Bank.

Mr. Sandilya (Asian Development Bank): I would like, on behalf of the President of the Asian Development Bank, Mr. Tadao Chino, to thank the General Assembly for adopting the resolution inviting our Bank to participate in the sessions and work of the General Assembly in the capacity of observer.

We would also like to thank the representative of China for sponsoring the draft resolution, as well as the delegations that sponsored it and the members of the Sixth Committee, which recommended its adoption.

The purpose of the Asian Development Bank is to foster economic growth, development and regional cooperation in the Asian and Pacific region. Our overarching objective is to reduce poverty in our developing member countries. In so doing, we are committed to helping them in their efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals that were adopted at the Millennium Summit in September 2000. We believe that strengthened cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian Development Bank will greatly benefit our endeavours, and we look forward very much to working closely with the United Nations family.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 165?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 166

Observer status for the International Centre for Migration Policy Development in the General Assembly

Report of the Sixth Committee (A/57/573)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Sixth Committee in paragraph 7 of its report.

The Sixth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 57/31).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 166?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 22

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations

(h) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Report of the Sixth Committee (A/57/574)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the

Sixth Committee in paragraph 7 of its report. The draft resolution is entitled "Observer status for the Inter-Parliamentary Union in the General Assembly".

The Sixth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 57/32).

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (h) of agenda item 22. Also, the Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of all the reports of the Sixth Committee before it.

Agenda item 25

Oceans and the law of the sea

Draft resolution (A/57/L.19)

The President: The Assembly will now take action on draft resolution A/57/L.19, entitled "Plenary meetings of the General Assembly on 9 and 10 December 2002 devoted to the consideration of the item entitled 'Oceans and the law of the sea' and to the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the opening for signature of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea".

Before proceeding to take action on draft resolution A/57/L.19, I should like to announce that, since the publication of the draft resolution, the following countries have become sponsors: Monaco and Nauru.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/57/L.19.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/57/L.19?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 57/33).

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 25.

Agenda item 28 (*continued*)

Assistance in mine action

Report of the Secretary-General (A/57/430)

The President: Members will recall that the Assembly began its debate on this agenda item at the 51st plenary meeting, on Friday, 15 November 2002.

Mr. Balestra (San Marino): Today, we are addressing an international humanitarian issue that warrants serious concern. At the outset, I should like to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (A/57/430), which both recognizes the progress achieved in current mine-action assistance and identifies improvements that should be made in order to continue to effectively tackle a current, yet unfortunately old, problem.

On previous occasions, my delegation has strongly stressed the need to provide continuous assistance to countries crippled by mines, and we have always supported the Ottawa Convention, an instrument that sets a strong and effective universal precedent in condemning the use of mines. Tragically, in the twenty-first century, generations in many parts of the world are being maimed and haunted by past and present conflicts as a result of regime tactics of engaging in warfare through the use of landmines. Political and social instability in various parts of the world further contribute to the problem and continue to victimize defenceless citizens, many of whom are innocent women and children. Landmines are indiscriminate time bombs; their victims are usually not their intended targets, nor do mines detonate only in times of conflict. Currently, more than 70 countries contain 1 million active landmines in unexploded-ordnance sites.

As stated in the Secretary-General's report, while some goals have been met, new challenges have arisen. Assistance in mine action is an important and essential initiative that necessitates continued support. It is a matter of humanitarian concern to which my Government is strongly committed. San Marino is also aware of the fact that landmines will be eradicated, not instantaneously, but through long-standing, effective commitment.

While the Ottawa Convention led to a substantial framework for both banning landmines and assisting countries affected by mines and by other unexploded ordnance, the United Nations — through the engagement of Governments, civil society and non-governmental organizations — must ensure the proper implementation of those commitments. San Marino strongly believes that, in order to attain concrete results in the field of implementation, it is necessary to establish a road map to evaluate progress achieved in implementing the six main objectives identified by the Secretary-General in his report. My Government is convinced that all areas are of equal importance, but we should like to welcome, in particular, the progress achieved in the field of information. The web-based electronic mine information network is an essential instrument to plan and coordinate mine action activities and to increase global awareness of the magnitude of this terrible problem.

As the Secretary-General stresses in his report, it is never too early to start long-term planning in countries at risk. Activities related to mine action should be integrated into the national development reconstruction plans of affected nations. The United Nations and its specialized agencies should continue to play an active role in providing technical support, consolidating their efforts with those of other political and non-political actors.

Despite the small size and the obvious financial limitations of the Government of San Marino, we have recognized the importance of landmine assistance in terms of both political and financial endorsement. Our modest support has taken the form of a financial contribution for the dissemination of information packets in communities threatened by this problem. Education serves as a means of giving people — especially children — who are endangered by landmines a way to protect themselves from this invisible threat. Although that is a step towards a solution, it is far from a complete answer. We strongly believe that international cooperation is the only effective way to reduce the tragic effects of existing landmines and to eradicate this terrible scourge in the future.

The President: Before calling on the next speaker, I should like to request that representatives be good enough to move quietly through the aisles at the end of each statement, or even during statements, as they enter and leave the General Assembly Hall, so as not to disturb the speaker who has the floor. I rely on those present to cooperate in maintaining order and quiet in the Hall, in keeping with the dignity and decorum expected of members of the General Assembly.

Ms. Ognjanovac (Croatia): The Republic of Croatia has direct experience of the disastrous effects of mines and, therefore, attaches special importance to mine action assistance. Croatia believes that the Ottawa Convention has gone a long way towards bringing the goal of a mine-free world just a bit closer to reality. It has opened a forum for discussion among States, forced us to take concrete and legally binding action to destroy all anti-personnel mines, and has given us a place to exchange information and expertise and, in some cases, to provide much-needed assistance.

Croatia actively participates in the work of the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines, including through various formal and informal groups that operate within the scope of the Convention. At the Fourth Meeting of States Parties, held in September 2002, Croatia, along with Australia, passed on the co-chairmanship of the Standing Committee on Stockpile Destruction to Romania and Switzerland and wished them every success in the coming year, especially at this crucial time when the first deadlines under article 4 of the Convention are about to expire. Croatia also voiced its appreciation to States parties for their decision to once again appoint it to another two-year mandate of co-rapporteurship/co-chairmanship, this time in the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration.

In regard to Ottawa Convention obligations, Croatia fulfilled its article-4 obligation to destroy its stockpiles on 23 October 2002. The seminar on "Humanitarian mine action: progress under the mine ban treaties", which took place in Dubrovnik at the end of October, was partly an article-6 exercise on international cooperation. The seminar was focused not only on international aspects such as Ottawa Convention implementation, including international and non-governmental organization (NGO) cooperation along those lines, but also on issues such as the development of new methods and technologies for demining, the financing of demining programmes, as well as education and awareness-raising.

Croatia is also working steadily on implementing its national mine action programme. Taking into account the admirable work of its deminers in past

years, and following the completion of recent surveys of suspected mined areas, we can with a fair amount of certainty state that there are about 270 square kilometres of national territory that are known to be mined, mainly along the former lines of demarcation, while a further substantial number of square kilometres of national territory are still marked as suspected of being mined.

We understand the need to have these areas demined as soon as possible, which is why substantial financial resources are allocated by the Croatian Government to the programme annually. Notwithstanding the fact that the majority — some 86 per cent — of the national mine action programme is financed domestically, we once again take this opportunity to thank all donor countries for their generous contributions throughout the past year.

It should also be mentioned that the Croatian Mine Action Centre has been active in helping to develop international mine action standards, mainly in the field of general and humanitarian demining standards and guidelines.

At the Second Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW Convention), Croatia fully supported proposals for extending the scope of the Convention to internal conflicts by amending article 1 of the Convention, as well as supporting the establishment of an open-ended group of governmental experts, with separate coordinators, to discuss ways and means of addressing the issue of explosive remnants of war and to further explore the issue of mines other than anti-personnel mines.

On these specific issues, Croatia distributed a position paper at the second session of the expert group, held in July 2002. In short, on the issue of explosive remnants of war Croatia supports the principle of systematic resolution of this humanitarian problem through the establishment of a legally binding instrument. Even though more work is certainly needed on issues such as definitions of explosive remnants of war, the role of international humanitarian law related to explosive remnants of war and defining whose responsibility it is to warn the civilian population and to clean up explosive remnants of war following a conflict, we believe that the time is ripe for us to proceed with a negotiating mandate on this issue. Clearing explosive remnants of war should be an indisputable humanitarian obligation; therefore, we will support moves towards the earliest possible conclusion of negotiations on this issue.

With regard to mines other than anti-personnel mines, Croatia still holds the position that these do not present the same humanitarian problem that anti-personnel mines do. They are not deployed in the same quantities as anti-personnel mines and, because of their size and material content, are easier to detect. We support efforts in the framework of the group of experts to make all mines other than anti-personnel mines detectable, as well as to raise the efficiency of self-deactivation/self-neutralization or self-destruction facilities in all mines other than anti-personnel mines, be it through a new or an existing legal instrument.

Croatia also took a further step in regulation of the use of all types of mines by acceding to amended Protocol II CCW Convention, on mines, booby traps and other devices, in early 2002 and will be ready to submit its first report on its national implementation measures in regard to that instrument by the end of 2002. That being said, Croatia naturally considers that, in the case where the provisions of the Ottawa Convention and amended Protocol II of the CCW Convention collide, the more stringent provisions shall apply, which in this case means that the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines shall take precedence.

Lastly, in the field of victim assistance, it should be mentioned that the South-East European Regional Centre for Psycho-Social Rehabilitation of Landmine Victims, which is situated in the Croatian coastal town of Rovinj, will be operating on a full-time basis by June 2003. The Centre, founded by the Government of Croatia and the Croatian Mine Victim Association, will cater to the needs of mine victims from the entire South-East European region, across national and political boundaries. While the Centre will be geared to children and young adult victims of mines, it will not exclude older mine victims, for whom a special programme will be offered at the Centre while schools are in session and children are unable to come.

The role of the United Nations in increasing international mine-related activities and cooperation remains indisputable, and we are looking forward to the continuing contribution of the world Organization. I can assure the Assembly that Croatia will remain actively engaged in this process.

Mr. Stritt (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): In recent years, there has been significant progress in international mine action. However, the world is far from being rid of this scourge, since millions of anti-personnel mines remain buried in the ground or in stockpiles. Much remains to be done; a world free of anti-personnel mines can be achieved only through the combined efforts of international organizations, Governments and civil society, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), experts and the population directly affected.

Switzerland recognizes the key role of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), especially in the fields of policy-making, coordination and advocacy. We also appreciate the valuable contributions of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other United Nations agencies in the fight against anti-personnel mines.

Switzerland welcomes the comprehensive and informative report of the Secretary-General on assistance in mine action (A/57/430). In our view, particular attention should be given to increasing local capacity and national ownership in order to guarantee the sustainability of mine action. Quality control and donor coordination are also crucial. Furthermore, we welcome the United Nations Mine Action Strategy for 2001-2005. The six strategic goals are very important and require the necessary attention and resources.

Switzerland also welcomes the fact that the United Nations and non-governmental organizations are encouraging States to ratify and comply with existing international instruments on anti-personnel mines. The Ottawa Convention clearly shows how multilateral instruments can make valuable contributions not only to reducing the threat of anti-personnel mines, but also to strengthening peace processes and international security.

Nevertheless, we must not lose sight of the complex issue of non-State actors, which continue to produce and use landmines. Progress towards a world free of anti-personnel mines would be promoted if non-State actors renounced the use of those weapons, in keeping with the Ottawa Convention. Therefore, Switzerland urges all non-State actors to renounce the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of all anti-personnel mines, in accordance with the principles and norms of international humanitarian law.

Mine action is one of the priorities of our peace and security policies, as well as of our human security policy. Switzerland, as a member of the Human Security Network, recognizes the common interests and objectives shared by mine action and activities in the broader field of human security. In particular, the efforts of the Human Security Network should be used as an additional instrument for strengthening mine action.

The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD), which Switzerland initiated and largely finances, provides significant support to the United Nations in the form of research and operational assistance. Under an UNMAS mandate, the Geneva Centre has developed international mine action standards and operates the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA), which is now in place in nearly 30 countries. The Centre supports implementation of the Ottawa Convention through its implementation support unit, which now plays an irreplaceable role, particularly by serving as an important communication and liaison focal point for all interested actors.

In the field of victim assistance, Switzerland, in cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross, the World Health Organization, UNICEF and Handicap International, has developed a strategic concept that includes not only mine victims, but all victims of violence. Only the integration of victims into the wider context of post-conflict reconstruction and into long-term development cooperation strategies will provide effective and sustainable solutions. That comprehensive approach is widely recognized and is used also by UNMAS and UNDP. The next step is to implement the strategy at the national and regional levels.

In order to strengthen mine action activities worldwide, Switzerland provides financial, human and material resources to United Nations programmes and to qualified non-governmental organizations. With regard to demining and the destruction of stockpiles, in 2002, Switzerland has financed projects or engaged experts in 15 countries, primarily in the Balkans and Africa. In 2003, Switzerland will focus its demining activities on Angola and Mozambique, and additional deployments of personnel are planned in Sri Lanka and Chad. In order to ensure adequate and sustainable human resources in the future, Switzerland has established a pool of demining specialists for

international mission deployment. In addition, Switzerland provides equipment, particularly devices for the contact-free destruction of unexploded ordnance.

In June 2002, Switzerland organized for the second time, in cooperation with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, a one-week workshop on the management of national mine destruction programmes. As Co-Chairman of the Standing Committee on Stockpile Destruction within the context of the Ottawa Convention, Switzerland will continue to play an active role in that field. The first official deadline for more than 10 States parties to destroy their stockpiles will expire at the end of March 2003. Switzerland will work closely with the other States parties to ensure that that deadline is met and that countries experiencing difficulties in meeting their responsibilities receive assistance and cooperation.

Switzerland welcomes the role that Geneva plays in mine action alongside the complementary role played by New York. Geneva was privileged to have hosted the Fourth Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention, from 16 to 20 September 2002. Switzerland will continue to provide the best possible working conditions for the following intersessional and future meetings of States parties, as well as for the numerous international and non-governmental organizations based in Geneva in order to facilitate the campaign against anti-personnel mines and their severe humanitarian consequences.

Mr. Sevilla Somoza (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Central American countries: Belize, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama.

At the outset, allow me to congratulate the Secretary-General on his excellent report on this subject, contained in document A/57/430. The progress made in the United Nations Mine Action Strategy for 2001-2005 is described in the report. We agree with the Secretary-General that this first year of implementation has shown how useful it has been to have a concrete plan with clear goals. The plan has also made it possible to have a more systematic focus on United Nations activities and on achieving greater coherence in all mine action activities.

The most disturbing thing about anti-personnel mines is their indiscriminate and unpredictable impact. Once a mine is placed in a location, it remains active indefinitely, affecting the lives of populations living near the minefields, who suffer the consequences of wars years after they end.

Central America has been the scene of several military conflicts that lasted for many decades and that ended at the beginning of the 1990s. During those wars, one of the preferred weapons often used by official armies and by irregular forces were anti-personnel landmines. Those mines were usually acquired outside the region, although there were also armed insurgent groups that used homemade explosive devices. There were cases in which the minefields were precisely mapped, but there were other cases in which no record of any kind exists. The competent authorities become aware only when mines explode and take their toll in victims, often children, women and the elderly. Anti-personnel mines are usually placed in economic and military installations, such as telecommunications systems, farmland, electric power towers and bridges.

That legacy of armed conflict continues to threaten much of the population of Guatemala, Costa Rica, Honduras and Nicaragua. Many agricultural areas remain fallow, and the population lives with uncertainty with regard to restoring their normal lives. However, economic pressure has often forced people to remain in those areas and to work near the minefields. Thus, the complete elimination of that evil is a task that we Central Americans have undertaken as an urgent need.

In an attempt to resolve the situation just described, in 1991 the Organization of American States decided to implement a project, which later became the Mine-clearing Assistance Programme in Central America (PADCA), with the cooperation of the States members and observers of that organization.

In an effort to deal with all aspects of the problem of anti-personnel mines, the OAS eventually expanded PADCA into the Programme of Integral Action against Anti-Personnel Mines in Central America, which incorporated previous mine clearance activities and serves as a focal point for the organization in all other aspects of mine action. OAS also established a mine registry for the hemisphere and decided to set up new mine clearance programmes in other countries of the Americas where this scourge exists and that request such programmes. Moreover, inter-American bodies have also cooperated in creating educational

programmes aimed at prevention, as well as programmes in the areas of physical and psychological rehabilitation of victims and the socio-economic recovery of demined areas in Central America.

The progress made by PADCA is due largely to the invaluable and generous support of OAS member States such as Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Peru, the United States and Venezuela, as well as to the contributions of major international donors such as Australia, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Norway, the Netherlands, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

All of our countries are States parties to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, which represents the effort of the international community to completely prohibit these treacherous weapons. All of our countries have also submitted the related reports and updates on the fulfilment of the Convention's provisions, in accordance with article 7. Similarly, none of the countries on whose behalf I am speaking have produced or imported anti-personnel mines in the course of this year.

I would now like to provide a summary of the current situation regarding mines in each of the Central American countries suffering from this evil.

During the long internal war in Guatemala, Government forces did not employ anti-personnel landmines. That is not the case with the Guatemalan Revolutionary Union, which made limited us of home-made mines and improvised explosive devices during the war. As a result, there are still high-risk areas containing unexploded devices in 13 of the country's departments. Volunteer fire brigades are participating in the fight to eradicate these weapons, which includes the efforts of 38 officers gathering information, marking mined areas and educating nearby populations of the dangers of landmines. In addition, the army has been involved in destroying these devices where they are found. In Guatemala we are also making provisions for the complete removal by 2005 of remaining devices from the 13 high-risk departments. We have encountered some difficulties, including rough terrain and poor weather. With regard to providing emergency medical assistance, some sites are only accessible by helicopter during the rainy season. The lack of accurate maps also makes planning difficult. It is estimated that there are still 6,000 unexploded devices in Guatemala. Guatemala has no mines in its arsenal.

With respect to Honduras, combatants in the Nicaraguan civil war laid anti-personnel mines on both sides of the Honduras-Nicaragua border during the 1980s. The departments of Choluteca, El Paraíso, Olancho and Cortés have been found to contain landmines, and all affected areas have been properly marked. The date originally set for demining has been pushed back due to problems related to the weather, harsh terrain and difficulties with emergency medical evacuations. It is hoped that mine removal activities can be completed by December 2002, when the last remaining landmines will be removed along the border between Nicaragua and Choluteca. Honduras has also destroyed its warehoused arsenals of mines.

Costa Rica has never produced, imported, stockpiled or used anti-personnel mines. As in the case of Honduras, the problem of mines on its northern border is due to the fact that mines were laid there by armed forces involved in the Nicaraguan conflict of the 1980s. Due to financial problems, the demining programme has suffered serious setbacks, especially since December 2001. At the moment it has been suspended, pending international assistance. An estimated 1,800 mines remain in the border areas of Pocosol, Upala and La Cruz. Affected areas include the sectors of Los Chiles, Tablitas, Isla Chica, La Trocha, Pocosol, San Isidro and others. Both the Ministry for Public Health and the Ministry for Education have continued their educational campaigns on how to avoid the danger of mines in affected areas.

A national demining programme was carried out by the Government of El Salvador from March 1993 to January 1994, with the participation of the armed forces and the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional. The United Nations office in El Salvador, the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) provided support for the programme. In the last year, El Salvador's armed forces have carried out several ordnance-removal programmes involving previously undetected devices that had been discovered when persons were injured. El Salvador has no stockpiles of anti-personnel mines.

Nicaragua, which is the most heavily mined country in Central America, is believed to have had around 135,000 landmines planted on its territory during the internal conflict that took place from 1979 to 1990. That figure includes both anti-tank and anti-personnel mines. Some 55,000 mines remain to be deactivated in various parts of the territory of Nicaragua. Mine removal in Nicaragua has been the responsibility of the army's corps of engineers, specifically its Small Demining Units, and is being carried out in five areas of operations. Removal has been affected by delays in programming due to unforeseen circumstances, and is expected to be completed by 2005 instead of 2004 as originally planned. On the occasion of the conference on Progress in demining in the Americas, which was held in Managua on 27 and 28 August 2002, the Government of Nicaragua carried out the destruction of the last 18,345 anti-personnel landmines that remained in the country's arsenals out of the original total of 133,425.

The Dominican Republic, Panama and Belize have never used, produced, imported or stockpiled anti-personnel landmines, not even for purposes of training, and are therefore not affected by mines. However, there is landmine contamination in Panama as a result of military and weapons-testing exercises that took place in the Canal Zone in the three decades prior to 1997. UNICEF, the Ministries of Health, Education and Foreign Affairs, and non-governmental organizations, have begun an educational project to raise awareness of unexploded devices located near population centres.

At the conference I just mentioned, vice-ministers from Nicaragua, Costa Rica and El Salvador, along with representatives from Colombia, Honduras and Peru, declared the following.

> "We urgently call on friendly countries that comprise the donor community for humanitarian demining, and especially on States parties to the Ottawa Convention, not to abandon or suspend the allocation of resources for countries of the Americas that have not yet completed their demining programmes and integrated mine action programmes".

In addition, they called on international partners to continue and increase technical and financial assistance to countries that have met their commitments to signing, ratifying and implementing their obligations under the Ottawa Convention. They also agreed to refocus efforts on attaining humanitarian goals under the Convention and on international cooperation and assistance.

We hope that every country will cooperate in order to eradicate the problem of mines from the face of the Earth. We also hope that we will one day be able to declare our planet free of anti-personnel mines and other explosive devices with indiscriminate effects.

Mr. Redai (Ethiopia): We thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on mine action. The report highlights the daunting challenges landmines continue to pose in many parts of the world and the collective efforts under way to mitigate the challenge. In this regard, we are grateful for the central role which the United Nations is playing in assessing the ways and means of minimizing and curbing the impact of landmines around the world and also for its coordination of the efforts of the international community against this menace.

Certainly, the increased international cooperation and coordination on mine action have registered encouraging progress in recent times. However, the challenges ahead remain enormous. As is noted in the Secretary-General's report, landmines continue to be a source of human suffering and hindrance to socio-economic progress in many countries. The availability of over 30 million landmines makes Africa the most heavily mined and the primary victim of these deadly weapons. As a result, conflict-ravaged Africa is left with millions of maimed people who need immediate support.

The impact of landmines in Ethiopia is no less severe than in any other African country. Ethiopia's exposure to the severe problem of landmines, unexploded ordinance and contamination goes back to the Italian invasion in 1936. The level of the challenge was exacerbated by the unprovoked Eritrean aggression against Ethiopia in the 1998-2000 so-called border conflict.

While Ethiopia's large land mass is mostly mined, the northern and north-eastern regions of the country along the border with Eritrea and the south-eastern region are highly exposed. The intensity and wide coverage of these deadly weapons continue to hamper post-war rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts, particularly in the North. As a result of the Ethiopian-Eritrean war, over 340,000 persons displaced from border towns and villages are still unable to return to

their homes and to resume normal lives. Landmines are taking their toll. They continue killing, injuring and threatening civilians in those highly infested regions. Between September 2001 and May 2002, 330 civilian casualties and injuries were recorded in that part of the country.

Having recognized the incalculable humanitarian and socio-economic consequences of landmines and unexploded ordinance, the Government of Ethiopia has accorded demining high priority since 1991. It established an Ethiopian demining project in 1995, but its effective demining operation was interrupted following the Ethiopian-Eritrean war. The cessation of hostilities between the two countries with the signing of the Algiers Agreement created an enabling environment for the resumption of the Government's mine-action programme.

The Ethiopian Mine Action Office has been reorganized and effectively operating since February 2001 to address the all-round challenges of mine-related issues. The Ethiopian Mine Action Office is coordinating and executing all national mine-action activities meeting international standards of humanitarian demining.

Sufficient data and information on landmines are prerequisites for a socio-economic Landmine Impact Survey. In Ethiopia, Norwegian Peoples Aid is conducting a landmine survey with assistance from the Survey Action Center — an organization of the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation — and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with a start-up fund from the Government of Germany. The United Nations Mine Action Service, UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund and other United Nations agencies are also engaged in assisting mine-action activities in Ethiopia. The joint United Nations landmine assessment mission to Ethiopia helped in the development of a national capacity for mine action and donors' support therefor.

While my Government is fully committed to making the country a mine-free land, the level of mine contamination and its socio-economic impact limit the Government's capacity to respond to the challenges, and it is in this context that we encourage the international community to increase its present humanitarian demining-capacity support to the desired level. In this spirit, it is critical that the support of the international community for mine-action programmes be enhanced in the areas of training, socio-economic impact surveys, rapid-response teams, mine detection, mine awareness, victim assistance programmes and enhancing the organizational capacity of the Ethiopian Mine Action Office.

In closing, my delegation wishes to seize this opportunity to sincerely thank all donors, the United nation system and the Bretton Woods institutions, particularly the World Bank, for their unstinting support in our effort to have a mine-free Ethiopia.

Ms. Espíndola (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): The presence of mines in the world has had grave economic and social consequences for people living in affected areas, due to their latent threat to local populations and the consequent impossibility of using broad areas of cultivable land, irrigation canals and roadways. It is increasingly evident that, in order to consolidate peace following a conflict, it is necessary to deal with the tens of millions of mines that remain scattered around various regions.

The existence of mines aroused the concern of the international community, leading to the Ottawa process that culminated in the adoption of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, a critical instrument to which Ecuador is party. At the Millennium Summit, the heads of State and Government urged States to accede to the Convention so as to eliminate the dangers involved in the use of mines.

The United Nations, aware of the grave consequences of the presence of landmines in various parts of the world, the number of innocent victims and the need to confront and resolve this crisis, and as a contribution to world peace, has adopted several measures that Ecuador supports. In this context, I wish on behalf of my delegation to thank the Secretary-General for the report he has submitted to the Assembly. That document describes the progress made by the Organization in the pursuit of the goals proposed under the United Nations Mine Action Strategy.

My delegation concurs with the view that, if the work of the United Nations institutions entrusted with mine action is to be fruitful, it must have clear goals and concrete plans that will allow us to determine the progress made over a specific period of time. At the same time, we consider unacceptable the delay of more than three years in the delivery of funds that donor

countries earmarked for Ecuador through the United Nations Mine Action Service for its demining programmes and to help us move forward towards fulfilling our obligations under the Convention. Moreover, an unjustifiable deduction was made from that cooperation on the basis of so-called administrative expenses, which not only limits our ability to pursue demining activities, but also runs counter to the principles of cooperation and discourages undertakings being arduously carried out by developing countries, such as Ecuador.

My delegation believes that the various mine-related activities should be carried out simultaneously. Eliminating the use of this type of weapon, removing planted mines, warning of dangers to the populations at risk through the distribution of maps and the marking of mined fields, and rehabilitating the victims of accidents caused by mines are all essential activities in dealing with this serious problem affecting various countries of the world.

The international standards for activities relative to mines, prepared for the United Nations International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, are a valuable contribution to strengthening standards, guidelines and the actions taken at the country level. In this context, Ecuador considers that distributing translations of those standards is a high priority.

Ecuador has not escaped the serious situation caused by the presence of this type of weapon. There are still mines in areas along its border with Peru, affecting development in the region.

Ecuador, by virtue of its commitments relative to the Ottawa Convention and through its commitment to its policy of defending international humanitarian law, has completed the destruction of stockpiled mines on 11 September 2001. It has thus complied with the Managua Challenge by carrying out that destruction within four years of the entry into force of the Convention.

With respect to the removal of planted mines, Ecuador has been carrying out intensive work. Considerable areas have been cleared and certified. However, mine removal and clearance efforts in areas of difficult terrain in the southern and eastern provinces are still pending. The nature of such terrain poses great difficulties for access and results in elevated costs and greater risks for mine-action workers.

In order to meet the goal of combating the presence of mines in the country, Ecuador signed an agreement with the Organization of American States. Through their valuable contribution, Canada and the United States, as well as Japan, have contributed to our plans for the destruction and removal of mines carried out in my country.

Cooperation given to the developing countries in this area is essential for continuing demining efforts, destroying anti-personnel mines and assisting victims. Ecuador makes a special appeal to those countries able to offer such assistance, since the urgent economic and social needs faced by developing countries prevent them from allocating greater resources to mine-related actions.

Despite those limitations, Ecuador is determined to firmly continue this process. My country has reiterated its commitment to continuing those efforts at the regional and multilateral levels. In this context, we should mention the Declaration of the South American zone of peace and cooperation, which was approved at the Second Meeting of Presidents of South America, held in Guayaquil last July, as well as the commitment to contribute to making the Western Hemisphere a zone free of anti-personnel landmines.

In May and June of this year, the Demining Centre of Ecuador (CENDESMI), responsible for coordinating these efforts in my country, carried out educational campaigns among the population in areas affected by the presence of mines, in particular, in areas used for agriculture and commerce. Nonetheless, funding is needed to continue those efforts. CENDESMI hopes to convert the centre for mine clearance training, operated by the Army Corps of Engineers, into an international demining school. The varied topography of Ecuador, combined with the experience accumulated by Ecuadorian demining personnel over several years of systematic work, enables us to train sappers to carry out these tasks in varied terrain.

Allow me to appeal to the international community to make the Ottawa Convention a universal instrument. Mine clearance is a humanitarian activity that seeks to restore hope and dignity to the persons and populations affected. Its objective is to recover the mined lands and to develop them for the benefit of those people. The conscious, responsible and

permanent effort and cooperation of the international community are required to achieve that goal.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 28. The General Assembly has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of agenda item 28.

The meeting rose at 12.06 p.m.

United Nations A/57/PV.53

General Assembly

Fifty-seventh session

Official Records

53rd plenary meeting
Wednesday, 20 November 2002, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kavan ..... (Czech Republic)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

African Industrialization Day

The President: Before turning to the item on the agenda, I would like to remind the General Assembly that today, 20 November, is Africa Industrialization Day. Today, the United Nations family observes Africa Industrialization Day with the collective spirit of supporting and promoting the development of the African continent. It is also an occasion to remind ourselves that more than 30 of the world's 48 least developed countries are located in Africa.

We are at the end of the Second Industrial Development Decade for Africa. The Decade, covering the period 1993 to 2002, was declared by the General Assembly in order to focus on promoting sustainable industrial growth in the region. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the lead agency for this programme, has just released the Industrial Development Report 2000/2003. The report provides an analysis of industrial performance worldwide and relevant rankings. It is an acknowledged fact that basic industry, and manufacturing industries in particular, are indispensable to economic growth. A skilled work force including managerial cadres, access to capital and technology, good governance and peace and security are only some of the preconditions for industry to flourish. It is expected that by the year 2025 more than 50 per cent of Africa's population will be living in cities. In that context, the harnessing of new information and communication technologies will be key to rapid sustainable development.

This year, the special theme for this Day is new information and communication technologies (NICTs). It is not a coincidence that through NICT — one of the most visible development tools — opportunities for the industrialization of Africa have expanded. We find that NICTs are at the heart of mechanisms linked to developing new markets and improving existing ones and that they have the capability of bringing villages and nations closer together by facilitating electronic access to global knowledge and creating an environment for learning.

The programme of action envisaged in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which was conceived and finalized more than a year ago under the auspices of Africa's leaders, set itself the goals of promoting accelerated growth and sustainable development, eradicating widespread and severe poverty and halting the marginalization of the continent in the globalization process. NICTs are an important tool for achieving those objectives: NICTs would facilitate human development, accelerate intra-Africa trade and improve access to markets of developed countries. Furthermore, NEPAD foresees the crucial role of NICTs in the context of Africa's recovery and calls for concrete and practical steps to develop a proper information and technology infrastructure.

The United Nations family, including UNIDO, the United Nations Development Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

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and the International Labour Organization, should continue their support for removing the many constraints that industry faces on using NICTs, through awareness creation and building capacity for national information networking activities and through facilitating public-private partnerships in the context of lessons learned from the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and the two Industrial Development Decades.

This is a day to renew the commitment of all parties — including the African Union, the Economic Commission for Africa, the Conference of African Ministers of Industry and the country-specific bilateral public and private partnerships — to the sustainable development of Africa.

Agenda item 22

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations

(a) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization

Report of the Secretary-General (A/57/122)

Draft resolution (A/57/L.18)

(b) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization

Report of the Secretary-General (A/57/87)

Draft resolution (A/57/L.11)

(c) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Caribbean Community

Report of the Secretary-General (A/57/254)

Draft resolution (A/57/L.26)

(d) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe

Report of the Secretary-General (A/57/225)

Draft resolution (A/57/L.23)

(e) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Community of Central African States

Report of the Secretary-General (A/57/266 and A/57/266/Add.1)

Draft resolution (A/57/L.25)

(f) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization

Report of the Secretary-General (A/57/119)

Draft resolution (A/57/L.22)

(g) Cooperation between the United Nations and the International Organization of la Francophonie

Report of the Secretary-General (A/57/358)

Draft resolution (A/57/L.29)

(h) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Report of the Secretary-General (A/57/375)

Draft resolution (A/57/L.38)

(i) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System

Report of the Secretary-General (A/57/128)

Draft resolution (A/57/L.24)

(j) Cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States

Report of the Secretary-General (A/57/386)

Draft resolution (A/57/L.32)

(k) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (A/57/576)

Draft resolution (A/57/L.31)

(l) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

Report of the Secretary-General (A/57/217)

(m) Cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union

Report of the Secretary-General (A/57/351)

Draft resolution (A/57/L.39)

(n) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of American States

Report of the Secretary-General (A/57/267)

(o) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference

Report of the Secretary-General (A/57/405)

Draft resolution (A/57/L.28)

(p) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum

Report of the Secretary-General (A/57/475)

Draft resolution (A/57/L.21)

(q) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission (A/57/255)

Draft resolution (A/57/L.40)

(r) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Southern African Development Community

Report of the Secretary-General (A/57/94 and A/57/94/Add.1)

Draft resolution (A/57/L.30)

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Association of South-East Asian Nations

Draft resolution (A/57/L.16)

The President: This morning, the General Assembly will begin a joint debate on sub-items (a) to (s) of agenda item 22.

I give the floor to the Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, Mr. Wolfgang Hoffmann, to introduce the report of the Preparatory Commission.

Mr. Hoffmann (Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization): I am pleased to be here today to report on the activities of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is one of the cornerstones of the international non-proliferation and disarmament regime. Its total ban on any nuclear test explosions in any environment will help in ending the development of ever more sophisticated nuclear weapons, as well as in arresting the proliferation of these weapons.

To date, the Treaty has been signed by a total of 166 States and ratified by 97. Thirty-one of those ratifications are by annex 2 States — the 44 States listed in the Treaty whose ratification is required for entry into force. The level and pace of signatures and ratifications indicates the firm support of the international community for the Treaty. The conference on facilitating entry into force of the CTBT, which was held in New York in 2001, led to a significant increase in signatures and ratifications.

The Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization was established six years ago to carry out the necessary preparations for the effective implementation of the CTBT and to prepare for the first session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty. The main activity of the Commission and its Provisional

Technical Secretariat during recent years was the establishment of the verification regime to monitor Treaty compliance.

The global verification regime needs to be operational at the Treaty's entry into force. It will be capable of detecting nuclear explosions underground, in water and in the atmosphere.

The International Monitoring System (IMS) consists of 321 monitoring stations and 16 radionuclide laboratories that monitor the Earth for evidence of a nuclear explosion. The IMS uses seismic, hydroacoustic and infrasound monitoring technologies to detect possible nuclear explosions. Radionuclide monitoring technologies collect and analyse air samples for evidence of the physical products created by nuclear explosions. Progress in establishing these facilities has been good, considering the engineering challenges that face the establishment of this first worldwide monitoring network. Currently, 43 per cent of the monitoring system is operational.

Good progress in establishing the IMS was in great part made possible by those States hosting facilities. I would like to take this opportunity to thank States for their help and flexibility, and express my hope that the good cooperation will continue for the remainder of the build-up process and beyond.

A Global Communications Infrastructure carries the seismic, hydroacoustic, infrasound and radionuclide data from IMS facilities to the International Data Centre. This global satellite communications network is also used to distribute data and reports relevant to Treaty verification to the States signatories.

The International Data Centre supports the verification responsibilities of States signatories by providing the products and services needed for effective Treaty monitoring. The Centre receives raw data from monitoring stations around the world, which it processes, analyses and transmits to States for final analysis. Improved software is enhancing precision in locating the events which produce seismic, hydroacoustic, infrasound and radionuclide data, and the verification system as a whole is being continuously developed and refined.

On-site inspections (OSIs) are provided for in the Treaty as a final verification measure, and the development of a draft OSI operational manual is a key task for the Preparatory Commission. The Commission is also acquiring inspection equipment and building up a pool of potential inspectors. A realistic field experiment was conducted in Kazakhstan in October 2002. The results of this experiment will facilitate preparations for real on-site inspections.

While the primary purpose of the CTBT verification regime is to verify compliance with the Treaty effectively, the verification technologies, data and products have the potential to offer a range of useful civil and scientific applications for sustainable development and the betterment of human welfare. In this regard, the Commission organized, at London in May this year, with the strong support of the Government of the United Kingdom, a Senior Experts' Discussion on Civil and Scientific Applications of CTBT Verification Technologies.

Seismic, hydroacoustic and infrasound data can be used in studies of the Earth's structure and for research on earthquakes, volcanic eruption forecasting, tsunami warnings, underwater event location and sea temperature and climate change monitoring. The data can assist in minimizing the effect of volcanic eruptions on civil aviation and can be used for oceanic swell research and atmospheric and meteorological studies. Radionuclide technologies offer opportunities for detecting radionuclide dispersion, monitoring radiation levels and studying natural radioactivity, as well as for supporting atmospheric studies, biological research and environmental change tracking. Follow-up meetings and seminars are already taking place among policy-makers and scientists in support of the work of the Commission.

The Commission organizes training programmes and workshops in support of States signatories in the enhancement of national technical capability for the implementation of the Treaty. They include training courses for IMS station operators in all four verification technologies, training courses for data analysis, storage and management, on-site inspection technologies, workshops for global communications infrastructure and workshops on international cooperation and national implementation of the Treaty.

In addition, the Commission promotes international cooperation among States signatories for them to participate in the fullest possible exchange relating to these verification technologies and the establishment and operation of national data centres. Since my last report to the General Assembly,

international cooperation workshops were hosted by Senegal and Kenya. Next week I will open a workshop for the Caribbean region in Jamaica and for 2003 workshops are scheduled in Azerbaijan, Fiji and Malaysia.

Along the same lines, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization's Preparatory Commission and the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, which share the same objective of enhancing international peace and security, concluded a Relationship Agreement in Vienna on 18 September. This is the first agreement concluded between the Preparatory Commission and a regional nuclear-weapon-free zone organization.

On 15 June 2000, the General Assembly adopted the Agreement to Regulate the Relationship between the United Nations and the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, thereby accepting the Preparatory Commission as a new member of the United Nations family. The Commission remains an independent international organization, but has been given formal status by which it can contribute to the goals of the United Nations.

Under this Agreement, the Commission's links and interactions with the United Nations and its programmes, funds and specialized agencies are developing even further. In order to fully contribute to the work of the United Nations family, the Preparatory Commission has requested full membership in the United Nations system's Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB). The Preparatory Commission already participates in the work of the High Level Committees of the CEB. In light of the disarmament related issues in the Millennium Declaration, we feel it particularly important that the Preparatory Commission should be able to contribute fully to the work of the United Nations family.

We believe that it would be of great significance for the General Assembly to be kept abreast of the rapid development of our new and growing organization on a closer basis. In times of increasing concern about the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the reports of organizations specialized in this field should be of particular relevance to the deliberations of the General Assembly. However, we understand that the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly is of utmost importance and that the clustering and biannualization of the agenda item on cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations was an important part of the endeavours in this respect. We will therefore look for alternative ways to inform the General Assembly about the outcome of the next conference on facilitating entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, to be held in 2003.

I am grateful to Ambassador Bota of Romania, the current Chairman of the Preparatory Commission, for the excellent work he has performed in Vienna. I also want to thank Romania for introducing the draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the Preparatory Commission this year.

In closing, I would like to emphasize that six years after its opening for signature, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has the confirmed support of the international community and is recognized as playing an important role in nuclear disarmament and in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons. By signing and ratifying the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, States confirm their commitment to these shared goals.

Mr. Pfirter (Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons): It is a great privilege for me to address the United Nations General Assembly for the first time since my appointment as Director-General of the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

I would like also to extend to you, Mr President, my most sincere congratulations for your election to this position, to which you bring experience, diplomatic skills and the respected voice of a country, the Czech Republic, whose contribution to the objectives and purposes of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) are well known.

The presence of a Director-General of an organization such as the OPCW at the United Nations universal body, the General Assembly, is as natural as it is necessary. It is natural because our Convention, and the organization it brought to life, are legitimate expressions of multilateralism in a field — disarmament and international security — where the central role of the United Nations is widely recognized. It is necessary because the CWC and the OPCW have a message to convey: this year and in fact every day, our work, like yours, simply cannot stop.

The United Nations has recognized the OPCW as the organization responsible for activities to achieve the comprehensive prohibition of chemical weapons in accordance with the Convention. At the same time, the OPCW, as stated by the Relationship Agreement between the two organizations, recognizes the central role of the United Nations in international peace and security.

Close cooperation between the United Nations and the OPCW seems self-evident. We are determined to work jointly to achieve mutual objectives — by maintaining a close working relationship at all relevant levels and by making sure that effective coordination is achieved in the various areas where the United Nations Charter and our mandate can converge for the benefit of disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The organization I represent is the single international institution providing at the same time for disarmament, non-proliferation and international cooperation and assistance.

We verify the destruction of the huge existing arsenals of chemical weapons. We monitor chemical industry and trade related activities in listed chemicals to make sure they are consistent with the provisions of the Convention. We assist and remain ready to provide help for member States in need of reinforcing or creating their own protective capacities and, in cases of attacks or threats of attacks with chemical weapons, we will stand beside those in need.

These three unique elements — disarmament, non-proliferation and international cooperation and assistance — find in the CWC, through the OPCW, the indispensable articulation to become integral parts of a single effort. In this sense, the CWC stands as an example of what can be achieved when the political will exists to tackle questions of global concern through the formidable power of an internationally agreed instrument.

As I explained in my address to the First Committee last month, member States of the CWC are making substantive progress in the achievement of the goals set out by the Treaty.

Destruction of chemical weapons continues. And this is indeed crucial, as we are not talking here of a mere clean-up operation of the remnants of the cold war. We are dealing with weapons of mass destruction, tens of thousands of munitions, seas of deadly chemical agents — all weapons of choice for terrorist groups, weapons that have been used in recent inter-State conflicts and that unfortunately remain within the inventories of some States.

OPCW inspectors are active in checking destruction activities in all the declared possessor State's facilities. On this front, the task is Herculean, but progress is being made on a continuing basis.

In the United States, the goal of the destruction of 20 per cent of stockpiles of category 1 weapons has been completed. India has also met this crucial threshold. Another State party is making progress towards that goal, with approval given by the Conference of States Parties for it to meet this target by April 2003.

In Russia, where the largest stockpile of about 40,000 metric tonnes of warfare agents remain to be destroyed, agreements have been reached within the OPCW. A number of decisions have been taken that will hopefully enable the Russian Federation to meet its obligations to destroy chemical weapons and to convert some facilities to permitted purposes.

In that respect, we are greatly heartened, and warmly welcome, the 10 plus 10 over 10 initiative for these and related purposes over the next 10 years approved by the G-8 countries at the Kananaskis Summit.

Slowly but surely, the OPCW, together with its member States, is creating the conditions for a world actually free from these weapons of mass destruction. From a technological and scientific point of view, our work is very demanding, as it deals with listed chemicals that, in most cases, do have legitimate civilian applications. The same can be said about the technologies involved, which fall under the well-known label of dual use. That is why we have to make sure that the Technical Secretariat is in a position to uphold the core provisions of the Convention in the light of the breathtaking pace of progress in the chemical industry worldwide. This is an area where we are currently concentrating our efforts in order to ensure the future relevance of the CWC to all States parties.

While we continue our relentless efforts at oversight and our activities to destroy chemical weapons, we must note that this undertaking will

demand ever-greater efforts from the organization in the very near future. Possessor States are announcing that new destruction facilities are coming on-line. This will have a considerable impact on our verification plan, which will grow accordingly.

The anticipated steep rise in verification activities is a clear indication of the challenges ahead for the organization. But the quantitative increase in verification activities is not everything that is involved, because the Chemical Weapons Convention is not only an instrument of multilateral disarmament. In parallel with the monitoring functions at chemical weapons related facilities, the CWC addresses the equally complex, and certainly more elusive, problem of the proliferation of instruments of chemical warfare. Given the vast scope of the chemical industry worldwide, efficient control of chemical proliferation is an arduous task that the Technical Secretariat has to face within the margins of its limited resources, especially against the backdrop of the growing number of facilities to be monitored.

The number of inspections will rise, but the nature of the exercise will also be altered by the combined influence of new technologies, evolving industrial methods and the lessons learned in the past few years by our inspectors. While facilities producing schedule 1 and 2 chemicals will permanently focus the priority attention of the OPCW, we shall also widen the scope of active industry monitoring activities in general terms. This process will be gradual, and it will be defined in consultation with member States and be fully in line with the Convention.

International cooperation and assistance are much more than good intentions under the CWC. Our activities in the field of international cooperation allow our member States to become full partners in the discharge of their Treaty obligations. As it is often said, the CWC is not a self-executing document. It requires constant interaction and an ongoing interrelationship between the Technical Secretariat and member States through their national authorities. This is indispensable both for verification purposes and for the enactment of implementing legislation and chemical exports controls at the national level.

Article X of the CWC mandates us to provide assistance in the case of the use or threat of use of chemical weapons. In the light of the importance of that commitment of the OPCW, we have been actively working to improve our preparedness and availability, not only in actual emergencies, but also in the area of capacity-building. Two months ago in Croatia, we conducted our first large-scale exercise, which allowed us to test our preparedness for chemical attacks and emergencies in real life conditions. We intend to continue with similar efforts in the near future, hopefully with the support and contribution of other international organizations, starting with the United Nations, as there are many areas where synergetic efforts can and must be found in this area.

Threat-perception and a new sense of urgency have become apparent after the tragic attacks in the United States in September 2001. Assistance has been finally understood as a necessity, especially for States lacking the resources to protect themselves against the possibility of an attack with chemical agents. Following the terrorist attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001 and the global realization of the possibility that terrorists might use weapons of mass destruction, an increasing number of States parties have invoked the Treaty provisions that request the Technical Secretariat to provide expert advice and to help strengthen their protective capacity. An increasing number of protection courses have therefore been presented by the OPCW in 2002, and some additional courses have already been scheduled for 2003 for the benefit of member States in Central Asia and Africa.

The OPCW is not a counter-terrorism agency, but it is clear that active implementation of the Treaty provisions can help against this looming menace. Doing that through a multilateral instrument like the CWC has the additional advantage of rallying forces that would otherwise remain unconnected at a time when the struggle for already-scarce resources is becoming acute.

In December 2001, States parties and the OPCW Technical Secretariat jointly identified a number of areas where useful contributions could be made to the struggle against international terrorism. Those include the promotion of universal adherence to the Convention, enactment of adequate national implementing legislation — including penal legislation — full and effective implementation of the provisions related to the destruction of chemical weapons capabilities, full and effective implementation of the provisions related to inspections in the chemical industry and transfers of scheduled chemicals to non-State parties, and the further development of the

OPCW's capabilities to respond to requests for assistance in cases of use or threat of use of chemical weapons.

In addressing the General Assembly, I cannot fail to mention the high priority we attach to the principle of the universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention. With 147 States parties, the Chemical Weapons Convention already embodies a significant number of Member States of the United Nations. But the Chemical Weapons Convention is an international agreement open to all States without exception. It is for that reason that we have consistently called upon States that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Treaty. I repeat that invitation here today. To that end, we have also designed several programmes and outreach initiatives to ensure that all States willing to join the family of nations opposing chemical warfare can do so easily.

For a global agreement like this, which entails security implications for all Member States, ratification by all is our permanent objective, and we continue to work towards that end. We must acknowledge that some States outside the purview of the CWC are of clear proliferation concern. But for others the overall security scenario prevailing in their respective regions could be a determining, and perhaps a deterring, factor.

All those elements have to be borne in mind when we tackle the issue of universality. The overriding notion remains, however, that this is a Treaty where all States, possessors and non-possessors alike, can benefit in terms of their own security, first and foremost, and also in other important areas relating to the peaceful uses of chemistry.

In a few months, in accordance with the provisions of the CWC, we will conduct the first Review Conference since the Convention entered into force. The principal purpose of the exercise will be to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the operation of the Convention from the legal and technical standpoints. The Review Conference will allow us to look into the past, to see what has been done and achieved in the first five years of the Treaty's operation and, perhaps more importantly, to identify the most urgent tasks we will have to face in the next five years. States parties will also be able to assess the implementation of the verification regime to date, and provide direction to the organization to continue its monitoring of the destruction process and of compliance. During the Review Conference, Member States will also have an opportunity to consider any scientific and technological developments affecting the CWC. Above all, this first retrospective and, at the same time, forward-looking exercise will be an ideal opportunity to reaffirm the validity and importance of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

If any lesson can be learned from recent events, it will confirm the continued urgency and validity of concerns over weapons of mass destruction. That is why we expect the widest participation of Member States at the highest possible level, as well as the active presence of international organizations and civil society, next April in The Hague. I do hope that the United Nations, as the principal Organization dealing with matters related to the maintenance of peace and security, will signal through its presence the high priority we all attach to efforts aimed at eliminating weapons of mass destruction.

In conclusion, let us remember that chemical weapons happen to be those which the international community has agreed to dispose of completely, without exception and in a verifiable manner. Let us never forget that the Chemical Weapons Convention is our common contract to achieve this lofty goal. Last but not least, let us always support the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which is no more and no less than the guarantor of that process.

Mr. Abelian (Armenia): In my capacity as Chairman-in-Office of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC) for the six-month term starting 1 November 2002, I have the honour on behalf of the sponsors listed in document A/57/L.11, as well as of Ukraine and The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization".

In this regard, I would like to express our gratitude to the Albanian chairmanship of BSEC for the successful conduct and conclusion of its term and the preparation of this comprehensive draft resolution. I should also like to extend our thanks and appreciation to the Secretary-General of BSEC, Ambassador Valeri Chechelashvili, who is joining us today in this Hall, for the leadership that he provides in running the day-to-day business of the organization. We very much look forward to continuing to work with him in his efforts to

build the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization.

This year, we have been celebrating the 10-year anniversary of BSEC. When it was established in 1992, no one could assure that this intergovernmental forum would survive. Yet, 10 years later, have we not only managed to stay together, but also to build on our experience and achievements to evolve into a viable regional organization. This spirit has been marked by the enhancement of BSEC's effectiveness and the expansion of the scope of its activities. BSEC has brought together 11 member States with varied resources, histories and economic conditions, as well as with some major political problems among certain member States. What we have in common is the shared goal to promote economic development, stability and prosperity for our countries and around the Black Sea.

We realized that, by combining and maximizing our resources, we would be better able to compete in and benefit from the modern globalized economy. One of the major goals of BSEC has always been the promotion of intra-regional cooperation and the development of effective partnership with other regional and international organizations, particularly the European Union and the United Nations system.

The adoption of BSEC's charter in 1998 and its transformation into a regional organization in 1999 were key qualitative steps forward in ensuring its role as an important tool for regional cooperation. Its granting of observer status in the United Nations in 1999 provided an international legal identity and thus a further positive spur to continue pursuing its goals and principles. In this spirit, BSEC has gained tremendous institutional growth and has successfully completed its formative stage. The creation of a system of related bodies and subsidiary organs has ensured its transformation into a full-fledged international organization and enhanced its effectiveness.

The draft resolution before us today is a comprehensive and result-oriented document. It incorporates and reflects the major goals, principles and objectives laid down in the BSEC charter and the declarations adopted at its summit meetings in 1999 and 2002. The draft resolution emphasizes the strengthening of regional cooperation in various fields, such as trade, finance, energy, transport, communications, agriculture, health care, environmental protection, science, combating organized crime, terrorism, illegal migration and illicit trafficking of drugs and weapons.

The draft resolution also attaches great importance to the enhancement of relations with the European Union and the United Nations system. It welcomes the signing of cooperation agreements between BSEC and the Economic Commission for Europe and between BSEC and the United Nations Environment Programme, while the cooperation of BSEC with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the World Trade Organization are considered to be priority issues. The draft resolution highly encourages the cooperation between BSCE and other regional organizations and initiatives.

The text we have before us was subject to extensive consultations both here in New York and in Tirana, Albania, during the seventh meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs.

I should like to draw the Assembly's attention to the following minor editorial changes that have been made to the document since it was submitted.

In the second line of paragraph 5, the word "particularly" has been inserted after the word "initiatives".

In paragraphs 11 and 12, the words "Secretary-General of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization" have been replaced by the words "the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization".

The objectives of BSEC remain clear and understandable: to develop equal partnership, to strive for a better life for the peoples of the region and to achieve stability and prosperity around the Black Sea through regional cooperation in various fields. The adoption of the draft resolution will undoubtedly further enhance BSEC's international image.

I should like to conclude by expressing the hope that the General Assembly will, as in previous years, give its unanimous support to the draft resolution before us.

Mr. Ouch (Cambodia): I have the honour, on behalf of the 10 States members of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) — Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines,

Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam — to introduce draft resolution A/57/L.16 on cooperation between the United Nations and ASEAN. May I thank all the other co-sponsors for their support to this draft resolution.

ASEAN, which was established on 8 August 1967 in Bangkok, is an expression of the collective will of the nations in the region to bind themselves together in friendship and cooperation to secure for their peoples the blessings of peace, freedom and prosperity. ASEAN and the United Nations have been development partners almost from its establishment in 1967, when the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and ASEAN started their long-standing and productive relationship.

On 29 July 2002, on the occasion of the 35th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Brunei Darussalam, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers agreed on the need to enhance cooperation with the United Nations as a pre-eminent multilateral institution. It is as a follow-up to this declaration that we are submitting the draft resolution calling for closer cooperation between the United Nations and ASEAN. Such cooperation is vital to the realization of the basic objectives of ASEAN, which include, among others, accelerating the region's economic growth, social progress and cultural development and promoting stability and peace.

In the light of the many facets of globalization, cooperation between the two organizations will contribute to economic growth and sustainable development in the region so that we could maximize the benefits of globalization while reducing its negative effects, in particular among the region's least developed countries, which thus far have not been fully integrated into the new realities of a globalized world. There is no doubt that ASEAN has contributed to building a culture of peace and cooperation in the region through enhancing habitual cooperation and maintaining regional peace, stability and security.

We have just successfully concluded the eighth ASEAN Summit, held at Phnom Penh, Cambodia, which attracted worldwide attention, followed by the sixth ASEAN plus Three summit meeting with China, Japan and the Republic of Korea and a separate ASEAN-India summit. China signed a framework agreement for a free-trade pact with ASEAN, as well as a Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea. Japan concluded an agreement focusing on human resources and investment, with the possibility for a free-trade agreement in the future. And, in a very positive move, India, at its first summit-level meeting with the group, offered to negotiate a free-trade area with ASEAN. I am pleased to report that the Summit also saw the strengthening of collaboration between ASEAN and Africa, represented by the President of South Africa in his capacity as Chairman of the newly established African Union. He spoke about the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which we fully support. Finally, ASEAN will also strengthen its cooperation with the Greater Mekong Subregion. On 3 November 2002, Cambodia hosted the first Greater Mekong Subregion Summit, held at Phnom Penh.

In the area of peace and security, the Phnom Penh Summit focused on strengthening cooperation to combat terrorism in the wake of the heinous terrorist attacks on 11 September last year and of the attack carried out more recently in Bali, which struck at the heart of ASEAN. It adopted a Declaration on Terrorism, which expresses ASEAN's determination to build on measures announced last year in the Declaration on Joint Action to Counter Terrorism by ASEAN leaders in Brunei Darussalam to intensify its efforts to prevent, counter and suppress terrorist activities in the region, while urging the international community to support its efforts. Also last year in Brunei Darussalam, ASEAN and the United States signed a Joint Declaration for Cooperation to Combat International Terrorism.

At the same time, ASEAN believes that the United Nations is the proper forum for international cooperation and therefore cooperates, both individually and collectively, with the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee. The ASEAN Regional Forum and the ASEAN plus Three process are viable and increasingly significant forums for peace and stability in the region.

In the area of technical cooperation, productive cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was underscored when the UNDP was officially designated an ASEAN Dialogue Partner. Ties between ASEAN and the UNDP were further strengthened by the launching of the ASEAN-UNDP subregional programmes, aimed at better assisting ASEAN in its regional cooperation and integration efforts. ASEAN cooperation has evolved over the years with such United Nations funds and programmes as the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the United Nations Conference on

Trade and Development and international agencies of the United Nations family, in particular the United Nations Industrial Development Organization; the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; the United Nations International Drug Control Programme; the United Nations Children's Fund; the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS; the World Health Organization; the International Labour Organization; the International Maritime Organization; and the International Atomic Energy Agency.

For the reasons that I have cited, we feel that the resolution under consideration will be beneficial for both the United Nations and ASEAN.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Fiji, who, in the course of his statement, will introduce draft resolution A/57/L.21.

Mr. Naidu (Fiji): Imagine, if you can, a region so diverse in its culture, history and geography that its people speak some 1,200 languages — a region of islands large and small, numbering in the thousands and isolated by vast distances, where pervasive socio-economic change and environmental adversity have had powerful influences on the way in which its widely dispersed communities have developed. Picture that scenario, and then ask yourselves how any of its inhabitants could possibly attain greater economic and social viability in today's world. The simple answer is, of course, through regional cooperation.

The people of the Pacific have long been guided by a strong sense of community and are able to interact with the world around them by working together and by sharing resources. Today, we boast an extensive and highly effective regional institutional network that serves us particularly well. It is for that reason that I am proud and honoured to be addressing this session on regional cooperation on behalf of the members of the Pacific Islands Forum. Our diverse members include the metropolitan countries of Australia and New Zealand; the Melanesian States of Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands, in the Western Pacific; the ancient Polynesian cultures of Samoa and Tonga, in the South Pacific; the remote micro-States of Nauru, Tuvalu and Kiribati, in the Central Pacific; and the Northern Pacific States of Palau, the Marshall Islands and Micronesia.

Today, our region is intrinsically linked through a network of organizations. Member States work closely together through our regional organizations on a diverse array of issues, ranging from peace and security to environmental protection, from aviation law to education, and from information and communication technologies to health. The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, our main policy-making body, oversees a central council of regional organizations of the Pacific that includes our regional universities, technical organizations, development and environmental agencies and think tanks.

As the Forum celebrates three decades as the principal multilateral body in the Pacific region, the demands of our members and those of the international community have also increased, thus shaping the interventions required by our regional organizations. The confidence we have in our organizations is demonstrated through the many initiatives and policy decisions in various declarations of the Pacific Islands Forum, the most recent being the communiqué of the thirty-third meeting of Forum leaders, annexed to document A/57/331.

At present, the Forum enjoys a special relationship with the United Nations through its observer status in the General Assembly and through the strong presence of a number of United Nations funds and programmes operating in the region. That relationship has matured over recent years and has broadened cooperation in new areas such as fisheries, small business enterprise, trade, human rights, democracy, peace-building and oceans management. While we are proud of the fact that the Forum and its membership have themselves provided the bulk of resources for most of the programmes in the region, what the United Nations and its agencies can bring — indeed, have brought — to the table in terms of development cooperation is something that we recognize and very much welcome.

As summarized in the Secretary-General's report on cooperation with the Pacific Islands Forum, contained in document A/57/475, the United Nations has provided meaningful assistance in peace-building through consultations and field visits to countries in the region and by participation in the Forum Regional Security Committee. Since establishing a United Nations Political Office in Bougainville, it has also contributed to peace monitoring efforts and has provided electoral assistance in Fiji and the Solomon Islands.

Other United Nations agencies have also established a strong presence in the region, with field offices for the United Nations Development Fund, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Labour Organization, the World Health Organization, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization providing direct technical and training assistance to the countries and the organizations of the Pacific. We urge those specialized agencies, along with our bilateral partners, to continue to work closely with the Secretary-General to enhance the coordination of United Nations-related activities in the Pacific.

Our members very much appreciate what the United Nations has done for our region. As we begin the process of carrying out the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and particularly as we move towards the 10-year review of the Barbados Programme of Action, it is important that those efforts be further strengthened and expanded. We, therefore, welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation that consultations be undertaken between our organizations to explore where further cooperation can be gainfully implemented.

To that end, Fiji has the honour to introduce draft resolution A/57/L.21, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum". Through that draft resolution, we, the members of the Pacific Islands Forum, reaffirm our commitment to a partnership of cooperation and friendship and offer some guidance to the United Nations, as well as to our international partners, on where such cooperation may indeed be strengthened and expanded.

Finally, in keeping with the theme of cooperation, I would like to express my group's sincere gratitude to the countries that have joined us in sponsoring the draft resolution. I am pleased to announce that the following countries have also joined as sponsors: Chile, Cuba, Greece, Israel, Kiribati, Kuwait, Malaysia, the Philippines, Sudan and Thailand.

With these short comments, draft resolution A/57/L.21 is hereby introduced for consideration by the General Assembly, and we look forward to its adoption on a consensus basis.

The President: I call on the representative of Turkey, who will introduce draft resolution A/57/L.22.

Mr. Cengizer (Turkey): On 12 October 2002, at the Twelfth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), held in Istanbul, Turkey assumed the chairmanship of the ECO. It is my country's honour, in that capacity, to introduce today draft resolution A/57/L.22, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization."

Next week is the tenth anniversary of the expansion of ECO. It was on 28 November 1992 that ECO welcomed Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan as its new members.

The seventh Summit of ECO, held in Istanbul on 14 October 2002, provided an opportunity to take stock of the decade-long performance of the expanded organization. In a time-span of 10 years, the basic documents of ECO were concluded, major agreements and plans of action were adopted and an impressive restructuring process was embarked upon. In 1996, a comprehensive economic cooperation strategy was prepared, according to which transport and communications, trade and investment and energy were outlined as priority areas for ECO. Today, the development and successful implementation of joint projects on energy, trade, transportation, agriculture, drug control and capacity-building can be cited among the leading achievements of ECO.

The founding document of ECO, the Treaty of Izmir, envisages the promotion of mutually beneficial interaction and cooperation between ECO and other regional and international organizations, as well as financial institutions. We welcome the report of the Secretary-General (A/57/119) on cooperation between the United Nations and ECO, wherein the status of that cooperation is elucidated. We also support the Secretary-General's recommendation in the report that specialized agencies, as well as organizations and programmes of the United Nations system and relevant financial institutions, should join in efforts towards the implementation of economic programmes and projects of ECO.

It is becoming increasingly apparent that the success of the globalization process requires enhanced cooperation between international organizations and, especially, a better division of labour aimed at more efficient and results-oriented collaboration. Only in that manner can regional development be strengthened

and our shared commitment to meet the Millennium Development Goals achieved. It is with that understanding that we have been encouraging the deepening of relations between the ECO and the United Nations system, as well as relations with other relevant international and regional organizations.

The draft resolution before us today, which is sponsored by all ECO members, is designed to further promote the existing cooperation between the United Nations and ECO in the spirit that I tried to describe a while ago.

Having assumed the chairmanship of ECO for the next two years, Turkey is determined to contribute to this common endeavour. No doubt, the technical experience and financial assistance of international and regional organizations will bring substantial added value to the activities of ECO in previously mentioned areas, as well as in the important fields of health, environment, food security, management, transfer of technology, rural poverty alleviation and energy efficiency.

Among the new member States of the organization, Afghanistan deserves special attention. Turkey is keen to see that ECO makes a concrete contribution to reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. As a matter of fact, ECO is preparing a plan of action, taking due note of the proposals of the member States. This plan will be forwarded to the relevant regional and international organizations so as to raise additional funds for proposed reconstruction projects.

ECO has the potential to initiate reconstruction projects for Afghanistan, modest as they may be, particularly in areas where it has accumulated experience. Contributions by Member States to the ECO Fund would greatly facilitate efforts in this regard.

Turkey will demonstrate every effort to make ECO a dynamic organization, one that will live up the expectations and aspirations of its members. The Seventh ECO Summit meeting has indeed given impetus to efforts geared at increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization. Further cooperation with the United Nations will undoubtedly help ECO to reach its goals.

The President: Before giving the floor to the next speaker, the representative of Malta, let me give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Perfiliev (Director, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council Affairs Division of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Management Services): I should like to inform Members, with regard to draft resolution A/57/L.23, that operative paragraph 16, as submitted by the sponsors, should read as follows:

> "Commends the role of the Council of Europe with regard to the electoral process in Kosovo, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, in preparation for the municipal elections on 26 October 2002".

I should like to inform delegations that draft resolution A/57/L.23 will be re-issued tomorrow morning to reflect this correction.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Malta who, in the course of his statement, will introduce draft resolution A/57/L.23.

Mr. Balzan (Malta): As Permanent Representative of Malta and the current Chair-in-Office of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, I am deeply honoured and proud to introduce this agenda item which, for the third consecutive time, features on the programme of work of the General Assembly. I would also like to avail myself of this opportunity to welcome high officials from the Council of Europe and delegations from the parliamentary assembly who have come to New York specifically to follow the proceedings of this item in the Assembly.

At the outset, I would like to express my country's deepest gratitude to the Government of Luxembourg for having worked indefatigably, under the wise and able leadership of Madam Lydie Polfer, Vice-Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, throughout the past six months, towards the attainment of the Council of Europe's tenets and principles and for having striven hard to further the achievement of European integration.

It is also my pleasure to announce that, since the tabling of draft resolution A/57/L.23, the following countries have joined the list of sponsors: Belgium, Colombia, Croatia, Dominican Republic, Germany, Greece, Norway, the Russian Federation, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. I would like to thank all sponsors of the draft resolution for their contributions and strong support.

Since its inception in 1949, the Council of Europe has fully recognized its noble mission to create an organization that would bring European States into

closer unity and association. Today, one can overtly confirm that the "Pan-Europeanization" dream, as enshrined in The Hague Congress of 7 May 1948, is not far from being accomplished.

The Council of Europe was founded on a given belief shared by the peoples of post-war Europe, to actively search for economic prosperity, social progress and harmony between and among European nations. The objectives and ideals of this organization, which are built on democracy, human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, have developed firmly throughout these past five decades. This is the direct result of the work of the Council, focusing initially on the re-building of Europe, and in recent years, on becoming a veritable "pan-European" organization by expanding eastwards. In embracing the Central and Eastern European countries within its fold, including the Russian Federation, the Council of Europe has succeeded in building a greater Europe, without dividing lines, benefiting people worldwide.

The Council, which is considered a beacon of hope and a benchmark for human rights, has grown from a mere 10 member States in 1949 to 23 in 1989. Today it boasts of 44 member States, representing 800 million people. This emerging European architecture evolved pursuant to the political changes at the end of the 1990s, following the fall of the Berlin wall, the demise of Communism and the burial of the cold war.

When Malta joined the Council of Europe in 1965, Prime Minister Giorgio Borg Olivier declared, "Membership of the Council of Europe has been for my country like returning home after a long absence". As Malta takes up the chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers for the third time, it notes with satisfaction that most of the countries of Europe have today returned home.

However, in this vein — and here I quote from the statement of our Foreign Minister, Dr. Joe Borg, made during the Committee of Ministers session on 7 November in Strasbourg: "We believe that, in view of the political changes within Europe in recent years, it is essential that the Council of Europe reposition itself and, in so doing, reassert its value".

My country is wholly committed to building further on the recent achievements made by previous Chairmanships. Our ultimate objective is to concentrate our efforts on two primordial goals.

First, aware of the Council's future role in a fa emerging European structure, my Government inten to pursue the process of the political unification greater Europe, on the basis of the cooperation structur made available by the Council of Europe, and intera with the major partners on the European scene.

Secondly, given that social cohesion is mo important in the promotion and protection fundamental political rights, we will intensify o efforts to strengthen further the social and cultur dimensions of European integration on a continen wide scale. In this respect, I would like to undersco that only a week ago the Maltese Chairmansh successfully organized a conference on access to soci rights. Experts on a pan-European level participated this important event to discuss the fundament questions concerning the process of access to soci rights. The conference also gave participants th opportunity to propose tangible and concrete solutio to the multiple and often overlapping problen inhibiting such access.

One of the major scourges afflicting humankin in this day and age is international terrorism. The trag events of 11 September 2001 and other events th followed have clearly placed the brutal realities terrorism before the entire world. It is our firm beli that the most effective manner to view those heinou attacks is as part of an unfolding historical process. is for this reason that the international community duty-bound, compelled and committed to fight again that undefined and faceless enemy.

My Government has openly condemne international terrorism, not only in the Assembly b also in many international conferences and forums. W maintain that closer and sounder cooperation at th global, regional and bilateral levels is indispensable f the successful eradication of modern-day terrorism.

Combating terrorism is our inviolable righ Henceforth, a strong Europe in a better-organize international community is becoming more and mo vital. In the wake of such uncertainty and instabilit we must be highly vigilant with regard to this ne emerging plague, since terrorism destroys lif annihilates democracy, rejects all legal orders an negates human rights. At this juncture, my delegatio commends the Council's recent adoption of th guidelines to help its Member States to safegua fundamental values in addressing terrorism. Thos

guidelines reiterate the responsibility of States to protect each human being from acts of terrorism, and, therefore, to recognize that the struggle against terrorism may require the adoption of specific measures, while at the same time outlining the limits that States shall impose upon themselves in this respect.

My Government remains firm in its unwavering and steadfast commitment to this fight, which continues to be ever more imperative, especially within the context of the negative impact of terrorist activities on the lives of ordinary and innocent people. We must form a common front to fight this scourge while simultaneously finding ways and means of dealing with its root causes.

In this connection, allow me to praise the Council of Europe for having assumed its full responsibilities in the fight against global terrorism by working in tandem with the United Nations on various fronts, most notably in the sphere of legal cooperation, the protection of fundamental rights and in the promotion of intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

Synonymous with humane values, the Council of Europe, in conformity with the provisions of Protocol No. 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights, prohibits recourse to the death penalty in peacetime. One notes with satisfaction that the Council has put the abolition of the death penalty high on its agenda, and in this regard, one is pleased to report that no execution has taken place in the Council's member States since 1997. With Protocol No. 13, which was opened for signature on 3 May 2002 in Vilnius, the scope of Protocol No. 6 was extended even further as it opened the way for abolishing capital punishment in all circumstances.

Within the context of globalization, it is becoming more and more important for the United Nations and the Council of Europe to promulgate cooperation by exchanging information and by seeking further coordination in their work, while at the same time encouraging the streamlining of activities with the aim of ensuring the proper utilization of resources.

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe dates back to 1951. However, one must not be oblivious to the accelerated and steady pace with which these two organizations have, in recent years, moved forward together. Testimony of this cooperation is well documented in the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General (A/57/225). Suffice it to mention the involvement of both the Council of Europe and the United Nations in the process of conflict-prevention, post-conflict rehabilitation and peace-building in South Eastern Europe, most particularly, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia — Serbia and Montenegro — and, further afield, in Georgia. At this stage, I would also like to add that the active contribution of the Council of Europe concerning the electoral process in Kosovo in preparation for the recent municipal elections has also been remarkable.

In view of the above, I would like to mention the fruitful contribution of the Council of Europe to the International Conference on Human Rights and Democratization in Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus, which was held in Dubrovnik, Croatia, towards the end of last year. The Conference was co-organized by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). In the Conference, the Government of Croatia and the European Commission offered Governments, regional organizations, national institutions and representatives of civil society the possibility of reviewing developments in the field of human rights in Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus.

Let me underscore that we are living today in an era which is indeed as interesting as it is difficult. The challenges, old and new, that lie ahead are enormous, yet not totally insurmountable. Having said that, I would consider it propitious for the General Assembly to call upon the Secretary-General to explore every avenue to further consolidate the already sound ties that exist between the United Nations and the Council of Europe in order to meet these challenges.

In conclusion, may I appeal to all Member States of the Assembly to support the level of cooperation existing between the two bodies and contribute to its further enhancement.

The President: I now call on the representative of Uruguay, who in the course of his statement will introduce draft resolution A/57/L.24.

Mr. Paolillo (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States to introduce draft resolution A/57/L.24 entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System". This draft resolution, which updates resolution 56/98 adopted by consensus by the General Assembly on 14 December 2001, is based on the most

recent report of the Secretary-General on this subject, which is contained in document A/57/128.

We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his report, which clearly demonstrates that, since the Agreement between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System (SELA) on 27 December 1991, cooperation between them has evolved and expanded in a way that is very satisfactory and productive for both entities. In this connection, we would like to point out that the *Summary* section of the Secretary-General's report (A/57/128) states:

> "Such cooperation has evolved over the years and has become more diversified in terms of both the areas of cooperation and the organizations concerned".

The diversification referred to in the report demonstrates that regional affairs, both economic and social, are closely interlinked, and that in providing an impetus for greater cooperation and integration among the countries of the region — one of the principal objectives of SELA — coordination is required with regard to issues that are increasingly complex and diverse. That is why it is essential to strengthen and expand channels of cooperation between our universal Organization and the regional system with a view to achieving a greater exchange of information and experience with regard to public policy and the formulation and implementation of projects.

The idea of strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and SELA is referred to in the preambular part of the draft resolution and is stated again in the operative part, where references are made to some of the specialized agencies, organizations, funds and programmes of the United Nations that have successfully carried out cooperative programmes with SELA. They are invited to continue and to deepen that cooperation. But such a process is not an end in itself; it must be directed at identifying the best way to improve our ability to attract resources, bring about greater coordination and make better use of technical cooperation, with the goal of contributing — in the words of paragraph 4 of the draft resolution — "to joint actions to achieve the Millennium goals".

In view of the positive developments in the cooperation that exists between the United Nations and SELA and given that we will continue to work along these lines, the draft resolution reiterates its request to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Permanent Secretary of the Latin American Economic System, to assess, at the appropriate time, the implementation of the Agreement between the two entities, and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. Finally, the draft resolution requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session a report on the implementation of the draft resolution.

The members of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States hope that, as in the past when similar drafts were presented, draft resolution A/57/L.24 will be adopted by consensus.

The President: I call on the representative of the Congo, who in the course of his statement will introduce draft resolution A/57/L.25.

Mr. Ikouebe (Congo) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the Economic Community of Central African States — Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, the Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe and Chad — all of which have sponsored draft resolution A/57/L.25, which is currently the subject of broad consultations. Any revisions that might be made to it will be communicated to you, Mr. President, before the end of the debate.

About two years ago — on 10 November 2000 and on 12 December 2000 — the General Assembly adopted resolutions 55/22 and 55/161, respectively, on cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Community of Central African States. Through those resolutions, the United Nations sought to support the efforts and initiatives of the Central African States in meeting the challenges facing them, in particular those relating to crises, armed conflict, reconstruction and development.

This year the draft resolution has been drawn up within a new context, and thus has a special character. First of all, on 22 October 2002, the Security Council, at the initiative of the then President, Mr. Martin Belinga-Eboutou, the Permanent Representative of Cameroon, convened a public meeting on strengthening cooperation between the United Nations system and the Central African region in the maintenance of peace and security. During that meeting a very constructive exchange of views took place between the States of Central Africa and their bilateral and multilateral partners on the situation in the region with regard to

peace, security and economic integration. The representatives of the Central African States and the members of the Security Council also discussed ways and means of strengthening existing partnerships between the United Nations system and the Economic Community of Central African States. Most speakers said that economic reconstruction, the strengthening of human and institutional capacities and the promotion of the rule of law were crucial elements for peace-building in Central Africa. Likewise, several members of the Council recommended that special attention be given to the development of the subregion, particularly with regard to making the international community aware of the need for immediate action to stabilize the situation in that particularly sensitive area.

I should like to take this opportunity thank our bilateral and multilateral partners for having reiterated, during the course of that debate, their interest in and commitment to helping Central Africa to strengthen its capacities in maintaining peace, security and reconstruction.

The statement by the President of the Council of 31 October 2002, following the public meeting of 22 October, now serves as a reference text for relations between the United Nations and Central Africa. The draft resolution before the Assembly stresses how crucial that is.

Secondly, I would like to refer to the regional development effort undertaken by Africa in elaborating the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which places Central Africa in a key position with regard to the development of the continent and provides the region with an opportunity to develop its enormous potential.

This new challenge is huge, just as our region is huge — a point made so well by the Gabonese Minister for Foreign Affairs, His Excellency Jean Ping:

> "Central Africa is evolving at the pace of a two-fold destiny. First of all, the destiny of abundance, characterized by a sort of divine providence that has bestowed upon our immense subregion vast natural resources — diamonds, leather, manganese, oil, and rich forests — necessary not only for its own development but also for that of the rest of the world." (*S/PV.4630, p.16*)

Today, with the gradual return of peace to most countries of the subregion, Central Africa, now more than ever before, has to try to live up to its enormous potential and to play a major role in the international arena.

As everyone knows, Central Africa has for several years been facing a serious situation of armed conflicts, destabilization, insecurity and, consequently, impoverishment. But, finally, there are some glimmers of hope on the horizon. Witness the political will of heads of State concerned, who are seriously concerned by the worsening situation and have given new impetus to the development of the region by taking initiatives to meet these challenges and by becoming personally involved in the quest for negotiated solutions. Witness the Libreville Summit on the crisis between the Central African Republic and Chad. Witness also the goodwill of parties to the conflict and the growing awareness of most actors, who finally want to give peace, reconstruction and development a chance. I refer also to the tireless support given by the international community, which has constantly accompanied the efforts of the subregion, as shown by the presence in Central Africa of 6 out of the total 16 Special Representatives and Special Envoys of the Secretary-General in the African continent.

An assessment of the cooperation between the United Nations and ECCAS, even if it has not lived up to all of our expectations, nevertheless gives us reason for hope. The report submitted by the Secretary-General, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Community of Central African States" (A/57/266), reinforces this impression. This cooperation has been reflected in many initiatives to implement confidence-building measures, security and development in the region.

Suffice it to recall the efforts made by the United Nations in the framework of the work done by the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, the creation of which is part of this political determination to establish a subregional mechanism for preventive diplomacy and collective security, and which is a special forum for effective cooperation between the United Nations and the Central African States in a very sensitive area.

Several mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution are being developed, and the many recommendations and decisions adopted

reinforce the image of a geopolitical space that is in the process of normalization. The efforts of the countries of the region are also shown through many actions to reinforce human rights, democracy and good governance.

In addition to these initiatives, we have given new momentum to subregional integration by reviving the functioning of ECCAS itself, whose powers since 1999 have been extended to peace and security and by re-launching, within the context of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central African States, joint programmes for economic and social development.

A lot remains to be done; the situation remains fragile. That is why we stress the urgent need for concrete measures to reinforce these various peace processes. This is also why we welcome the recommendation contained in the Statement by the President of the Security Council, dated 31 October 2002, for

> "the inclusion, where appropriate, of support for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in the mandates of peacekeeping and peace-building operations". (*S/PRST/2002/31, p.3*)

This is key, because, whether we are talking about the Lusaka, Sun City or Pretoria Agreements on the conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in Angola or in Burundi, or the Libreville Agreements — just to refer to these instruments — the continuation and stepping up of cooperation between the United Nations and ECCAS remain decisive for our efforts to bring about stability in the subregion and to promote its development.

Draft resolution A/57/L.25 meets these concerns. It reiterates the texts adopted in 2000 and 2001 and stresses the conclusions reached at the public meeting of the Security Council on 22 October 2002, which was a milestone. We cannot over-emphasize the urgent importance, in a context marked by the need for post-conflict peace-building, of supporting the process of conflict prevention and settlement, as well as the implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes.

Accordingly, the countries of the subregion reiterate their commitment to strengthen all existing mechanisms available for preventive diplomacy and collective security in order to ensure that the whole subregion enjoys social and economic development commensurate with its enormous assets.

In order to attain these two goals, peace and development, the Central African States place real hopes on cooperation between the United Nations and the ECCAS.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Jamaica who, in the course of his statement, will introduce draft resolution A/57/L.26.

Mr. Neil (Jamaica): I have the honour to introduce, for the consideration of the General Assembly, the draft resolution entitled, "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Caribbean Community", which is before the Assembly as document A/57/L.26. I do so on behalf of the following sponsors: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and my own country, Jamaica.

Activities pertaining to cooperation between the United Nations and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) have been dealt with in the report of the Secretary-General in document A/57/254 prepared pursuant to paragraph 8 of resolution 55/17 of 7 November 2000. The report outlines various aspects of cooperation between the secretariats of the United Nations and CARICOM, which involves an active process of consultation and exchange of information.

This cooperation has been growing in areas critical to the economic and social development of the Caribbean subregion including disaster preparedness and risk reduction, follow-up action, in relation to major international conferences, drug control, health, the environment and marine affairs.

Cooperation has been strengthened through the involvement of various United Nations bodies and agencies, including the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga (Ecuador), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In its preambular section, the draft resolution before the Assembly reaffirms the importance of regional organizations in furthering the role of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security, within the context of Chapter VIII of the Charter. It also notes the fruitful results of meetings held between representatives of the United Nations and the Caribbean Community. It draws attention to two initiatives of particular interest to Caribbean Community: first, the importance of the adoption of an integrated management approach to the Caribbean Sea in the context of sustainable development and, secondly, the necessity for the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action on Small Island Developing States. It notes relevant proposals emanating from recent international conferences, in particular the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, and the United Nations special session on HIV/AIDS, in which special recognition was given to the situation in the Caribbean region. It also reaffirms the need to strengthen existing cooperation in the areas of economic and social development, as well as in political and humanitarian affairs.

In its operative section, the draft resolution takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on cooperation between the United Nations and the Caribbean Community, as well as of efforts to strengthen that cooperation. It calls upon the Secretary-General, in association with the Secretary-General of CARICOM, to continue to assist in furthering the development and maintenance of peace and security within the Caribbean. It urges specialized agencies and other organizations and programmes of the United Nations system to cooperate in order to initiate, maintain and increase consultations and programmes with the Caribbean Community and its associated institutions in the attainment of their objectives, giving special attention to the areas and issues identified at the second general meeting, held in March 2000. The draft resolution also welcomes the initiatives of Member States to assist the cooperation between the two secretariats, and recommends that a third meeting between representatives of the two organizations be held in New York in March 2003, in order to review and appraise progress in the implementation of the agreed areas and issues and to hold consultations on such additional measures and procedures as may be required to facilitate and strengthen cooperation between the two organizations. Finally, it requests a report by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly during the fifty-ninth session and the inclusion in the provisional agenda of that session of an item on the subject for its consideration.

I should like to announce that since the publication of the draft resolution, the following countries have become sponsors: Canada, Chile, Cuba, Ecuador and Japan.

The contents of the draft resolution basically seek to further develop the process of cooperation and collaboration between the United Nations system and the Caribbean Community. Its provisions, we believe, will receive wide support within the Assembly. It is the hope of the sponsors that, as in previous years, this draft resolution can be adopted by consensus.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Sudan to introduce draft resolution A/57/L.28.

Mr. Erwa (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is a pleasure and an honour to submit to the Assembly the draft resolution contained in document A/57/L.28, which is sponsored by Algeria, Gambia, Mali, Malaysia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sudan, Syria and Turkey. I will read out additional sponsors later on.

The draft resolution relates to agenda item 22, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations", and specifically to sub-item (o), entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference".

At the outset, we would like to commend the annual report submitted by the Secretary-General in document A/57/405, in which the Secretary-General gives a detailed accounting of the consultations that have taken place in the course of the year between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference in the political, economic, social, humanitarian and other spheres.

In its preambular part, the draft resolution recalls resolution 3369 (XXX), of 10 October 1975, by which the General Assembly decided to invite the Organization of the Islamic Conference to participate as an observer in the work of the General Assembly

and its subsidiary bodies. The draft resolution also welcomes the results of the meetings held at Vienna from 11 to 13 July 2002 between the agencies and bodies of the United Nations and those of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

In its operative part, the draft resolution deals with the following salient issues. First, the draft resolution notes with satisfaction the active participation of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in the activities of the United Nations in realizing the purposes and principles of the Charter.

Secondly, the draft resolution welcomes the efforts made by the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference to promote cooperation between the two organizations in areas of common interest and to consider ways and means of enhancing the actual mechanisms of that cooperation.

Thirdly, the draft resolution welcomes the periodic high-level meetings held between the Secretaries-General of the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and encourages their joint participation in the important meetings held by both organizations.

Fourthly, the draft resolution urges the entire United Nations system, and especially donor agencies, to increase their technical and other support to the Organization of the Islamic Conference and its subsidiary bodies and specialized and associated agencies to enhance and strengthen cooperation.

Fifthly, the draft resolution expresses appreciation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his continued efforts to strengthen cooperation and coordination between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference in the political, economic, social, cultural and scientific spheres.

Sixthly, the draft resolution calls on the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session a report on the state of cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. It also calls for the inclusion of an agenda item entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference" in the provisional agenda of the Assembly's fifty-ninth session.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Lebanon to introduce draft resolutions A/57/L.29 and A/57/L.32.

Mr. Diab (Lebanon) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me to associate myself with previous speakers in conveying profound gratitude to the Secretary-General for the high quality and precision of his report entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the International Organization of la Francophonie".

I take this opportunity to congratulate the Government of Senegal on the election of Mr. Abdou Diouf to the post of Secretary-General of the International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF) at the ninth summit, held at Beirut in October. We assure him of our full support as he undertakes his important duties. I also thank his predecessor, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his work in office to promote the role of OIF and to develop its relations with the United Nations.

It is a great honour for me to introduce, on behalf of the 68 sponsors, the draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the International Organization of la Francophonie, contained in document A/57/L.29. Turkey and San Marino have joined the list of sponsors of the draft resolution.

The current draft resolution is an update of resolution 56/45 and deals with the same subject. It includes a preambular part consisting of 10 paragraphs, which is the draft resolution's legal basis for the cooperation between the United Nations and OIF in promoting the purposes and principles of the Organization. The preambular part addresses in particular the crucial commitments adopted in the Beirut plan of action by the heads of State and Government of countries that use French as a common language. Those commitments are the guidelines for action in which Francophonie can and must play a major role in the fight against poverty and the establishment of a more equitable globalization that is conducive to progress, peace, democracy and human rights and is respectful of cultural and linguistic diversity to the benefit of the most vulnerable people and for the development of all countries.

The operative part of the draft resolution consists of 17 paragraphs that identify previous international and regional attempts and subsequent steps to consolidate, develop and strengthen existing links

between the United Nations and OIF in the political, economic, social and cultural areas.

The operative part stresses the increasingly close and fruitful cooperation between the United Nations and OIF. The Secretary-General's report indicates progress made in the number and quality of cooperative activities cited in the operative part of the draft resolution and jointly conducted by both organizations. This cooperation has several aspects, including political cooperation within the secretariats; cooperation in the economic, social and cultural fields; and cooperation with the United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies through participation in conferences organized under the auspices of the United Nations system and OIF. Such cooperation is designed to pool efforts in the areas of preventive diplomacy, the promotion of democracy, peacemaking, peace-building, the promotion of human rights and of economic, social and cultural development, and participation in strengthening the dialogue between cultures and civilizations.

Lebanon keenly hopes that cooperation between the United Nations and OIF will be strengthened and extended to a growing and more diversified number of fields. That is why my delegation calls on the General Assembly to give its full support to the draft resolution.

In conclusion, I am pleased to stress the importance of the solidarity expressed in favour of the Arabic language and culture at the most recent OIF summit — held for the first time in an Arab country, Lebanon — by the heads of State and Government of countries that use French as a common language. The summit offered the heads of State and Government an opportunity to support, through the Beirut Declaration, the Arab peace initiative unanimously adopted at the Arab summit held in Beirut in March.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

On behalf of the delegations of Arab members of the League of Arab States, and in Lebanon's capacity as Chairman of the Group of Arab States at the United Nations for this month, I have the honour to submit the draft resolution contained in document A/57/L.32, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States".

The current links between the United Nations and the League of Arab States reflect the cooperation and integration envisioned under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. The relationship between the two organizations is built on firm foundations, as enshrined in the purposes and principles of their two charters. This relationship has evolved over the years in many areas, including the promotion of international peace and security, decolonization, disarmament and economic, social and cultural development.

The new international political realities of today's world are undergoing enormous changes that affect regional and international relations. These new realities have led to increased responsibilities for the United Nations in its efforts to find solutions to problems affecting world peace and security. The League of Arab States has been eager to cooperate with the Secretary-General of the United Nations in order to strengthen the Organization's role in establishing peace on the basis of justice and United Nations resolutions, especially in our Arab region. In this regard, the presence of the Secretary-General of the United Nations at the League of Arab States Summit held in Beirut last March reflected that cooperation and helped to increase international support for the Arab peace initiative adopted at the Beirut Summit and welcomed by the Security Council in its resolutions 1397 (2002) and 1435 (2002).

We consider that, in view of current events in the occupied Palestinian territories, it is necessary to intensify that cooperation and to ensure a greater United Nations contribution to ending Israel's occupation of Arab territories and the Israeli occupying forces' continued aggression against the Palestinian people.

In the same context, there is a pressing need to enhance cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States in economic, social and developmental areas. This would accelerate the pace of development in the Arab world and fulfil the common goals of the two organizations.

There are many examples of practical cooperation between the United Nations, which is an international organization, and the League of Arab States, which is a regional organization, in the areas of conflict prevention and peace-building. In this regard, we would like to refer to the appeal launched by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the States members of the League of Arab States that resulted in the letter addressed by the Iraqi Foreign Minister to the

Secretary-General of the United Nations on 16 September 2002 (S/2002/1034, annex). That letter stated Iraq's response to the international will and its agreement to the return of the international weapons inspectors without restrictions or conditions. Iraq's response represented a first step towards a comprehensive solution that would ensure the implementation of the remaining Security Council resolutions and would bring about, inter alia, the lifting of sanctions; respect for Iraq's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity; and the conversion of the Middle East into a region free of weapons of mass destruction. In the report before the Assembly (A/57/386), the Secretary-General highlights the role of the League of Arab States in facilitating Iraq's agreement to return documents belonging to the Kuwaiti archives.

The preamble of draft resolution A/57/L.32 underscores the desire of the two organizations to further consolidate existing ties in all areas and to continue their cooperation in order to enhance their common goals and to promote the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The operative part takes note with satisfaction of the Secretary-General's report, and expresses its appreciation to the Secretary-General for the follow-up action taken by him to implement the proposals adopted at the meetings between the secretariats of the United Nations and other organizations of the United Nations system and the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States and its specialized organizations, including the sectoral meeting on the use of information technology in development held at the headquarters of the League of Arab States in Cairo, from 18 to 20 June 2002.

Also, the operative part calls for intensified cooperation in the political, economic, social, humanitarian, cultural and administrative fields. In line with that approach, paragraph 10 recommends that representatives from both organizations meet every two years and that joint inter-agency sectoral meetings should also be convened on a biennial basis to address priority areas of major importance to the development of the Arab States.

Finally, on behalf of the Arab Group, I wish to invite the General Assembly, which represents the international community, to support cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States. Our group hopes that the draft resolution before us will be adopted by consensus.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Angola, who, in the course of her statement, will introduce draft resolution A/57/L.30.

Ms. Izata (Angola): I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/57/L.30, on cooperation between the United Nations and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) on behalf of SADC member countries, which include Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, Swaziland, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and my own country, Angola. The Secretary-General's report, document A/57/94, indicates that the United Nations stands ready to increase its cooperation with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in areas that can promote sustainable development and regional integration. The draft resolution strongly emphasizes the need for United Nations bodies, the international community, the private sector and civil society to continue to assist and participate in the development of the Southern African region.

The purpose of the draft resolution is to strengthen and increase cooperation and support between the United Nations and countries in the region, particularly in areas of major concern to the region, such as the consolidation and maintenance of democracy, peace and security, peace-building and sustainable development. The draft resolution has been updated to incorporate recent developments, particularly the adoption of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the movement towards peace in Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the humanitarian situation in Southern Africa. The continued high prevalence in the region of HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases, such as malaria and tuberculosis, has also influenced the content of the draft resolution.

In its preambular part, the draft resolution, having recalled all General Assembly resolutions and decisions on the promotion of cooperation between the United Nations and SADC, welcomes the adoption of the New Partnership for Africa's Development by the African Union and its endorsement by the Assembly. The preambular part of the draft resolution also

expresses concern about the difficult humanitarian situation facing the countries in the region and expresses its appreciation for valuable and effective support demonstrated by the United Nations and the international community. Furthermore, in its operative part, the draft resolution calls upon the United Nations and the international community to support with appropriate resources SADC's efforts to implement the outcomes of the Millennium Assembly and other major United Nations conferences and summits. It appeals to the international community to continue to support the measures taken by SADC in addressing HIV/AIDS and to extend much-needed assistance to SADC countries that are engaged in the process of national reconstruction, sound economic policies, good governance and the rule of law to enhance the implementation of their national economic programmes.

The draft resolution also expresses its support to the economic reforms being implemented by SADC member States in pursuance of their shared vision of creating a regional economic community through deeper integration, and calls upon the international community to support their efforts in capacity-building and in addressing the new challenges presented to the economies of the region arising from the process of globalization and liberalization.

Finally, in paragraph 21, the Secretary-General is requested to submit a report on the implementation of the draft resolution to the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

Besides members of the Southern African Development Community, countries that have joined the list of sponsors include Gabon, Morocco, the Sudan and Uganda. I take this opportunity to thank all the delegations that provided their support during the elaboration of this draft resolution -- namely, those of Brazil, Mexico, Morocco, the Russian Federation, Thailand and the United States, as well as the European Union. It is my wish that the draft resolution be adopted by consensus. We would also welcome the inclusion of other countries that wish to join the list of sponsors.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands, who, in the course of his statement, will introduce draft resolution A/57/L.31.

Mr. Hamburger (Netherlands): I will be brief. First of all, I should like to thank Mr. Rogelio Pfirter, Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), for presenting the report of the OPCW.

Secondly, my delegation has the pleasure to introduce, on behalf of the sponsors, the draft resolution regarding cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, as contained in document A/57/L.31. I should like to inform the Assembly that the following countries have joined the list of sponsors: Belgium, Canada, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Germany, Monaco, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Slovenia, Thailand, the United Kingdom and Yugoslavia. This procedural draft resolution, once adopted, will enable the General Assembly to include in the agenda of its fifty-ninth session an item entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons".

I should like to take this opportunity to thank all those countries that have sponsored this draft resolution, and I warmly recommend that the draft resolution be adopted by consensus.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Chile, who, in the course of his statement, will introduce draft resolution A/57/L.38.

Mr. Valdés (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to introduce to the General Assembly the draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, contained in document A/57/L.38. I should like to add the following countries to the list of sponsors: Armenia, Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, the Central African Republic, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Germany, Guinea, Iceland, Indonesia, Iraq, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Morocco, the Netherlands, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam.

The draft resolution that I have the honour to introduce is of great importance for the Organization. It

represents the culmination of several years of joint work by the United Nations, its Member States and the Inter-Parliamentary Union to add a parliamentary dimension to the structure of multilateral cooperation. The scope and the quality of that cooperation are detailed in the report of the Secretary-General on cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, contained in document A/57/375.

Our world is experiencing an era of great changes that entail an important evolution in international relations. That in turn requires our peoples and multilateral organizations to work more closely together. It also gives rise to the need for national parliaments to contribute to international cooperation. It is national parliaments that have the constitutional duty to represent their peoples. In addition, they have an important role in transforming United Nations agreements into national policies. That is why, in the Millennium Declaration, our heads of State or Government resolved to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and national parliaments through their world organization, the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union brings together more than 140 parliaments of the world and can be a channel for cooperation between the United Nations and national parliaments. For this new type of cooperation to be effective, we have recognized the need to change the Statutes of the world organization of parliaments. At our request, the IPU Secretary General prepared a report last year in which he made a series of recommendations as to the contents of new Statutes.

The draft resolution that I have the honour to introduce is the result of broad consultations among Member States on the basis of the Secretary-General's recommendations. Accordingly, the draft resolution takes up, first of all, a very important development with respect to the Inter-Parliamentary Union that has long been an aspiration of many Member States: the granting of United Nations observer status to the Union. That recognition is bestowed by virtue of the Union's unique character as an inter-State organization whose essential functions are focused on inter-parliamentary activity. In consideration of that aspect, the draft resolution authorizes the Inter-Parliamentary Union to circulate its official documents at no cost to the organization.

In turn, the draft resolution invites the specialized agencies of the United Nations system to consider adopting similar modalities with respect to the Inter-Parliamentary Union. It calls upon the Secretary-General to adopt the necessary measures to strengthen the cooperation and the relationship between the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the General Assembly. Finally, the draft resolution places this item, on the agenda of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

The sponsors of the draft resolution express the hope that it can be adopted by consensus.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa, who, in the course of his statement, will introduce draft resolution A/57/L.39.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): On behalf of the African Group, it gives my delegation pleasure to stand before this body to introduce the draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union, contained in document A/57/L.39. I am pleased to announce that the following countries have joined as sponsors of the draft resolution: Algeria, Angola, Belgium, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, the Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, the Comoros, the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, the Philippines, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, the Sudan, Swaziland, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

When the African Union held its summit in Durban, South Africa, the heads of State and Government took decisions that were aimed at accelerating sustainable development in the continent. In adopting the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), Africa took steps which coincided with the Millennium Development Goals contained in the Millennium Declaration adopted by this body two years ago.

My delegation wishes to take note of the elaborate and incisive report of Secretary-General on

cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union. In particular, we welcome the creation of an Office that will coordinate issues related to Africa within the United Nations system. This, we believe, will facilitate and consolidate the work of all United Nations agencies with a view to enhancing their effectiveness.

The draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union lays a very solid foundation upon which the relationship between the two organizations will be built and determines the future of Africa and our commitment to the Millennium Development Goals. The relationship between the two organizations is rightly being reviewed to reflect the establishment of the African Union. In this regard, the draft resolution highlights new institutions of the African Union aimed at establishing peace and security in the continent. These structures are the African Union Peace Fund, the Panel of the Wise, a military staff committee and an African standby force.

Any assistance — technical, financial and/or otherwise — aimed at facilitating the establishment of these structures by the African Union will enhance the capability of the continent and its member States in matters related to conflict management, prevention and resolution. The African Union has adopted and is currently implementing a Memorandum of Understanding on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation to enhance and stabilize the continent.

The African Union and the international community are focused in their commitment to fight terrorism. The continent believes that this fight against terrorism can be successful only if it is based on international cooperation. At the continental level, African States have adopted the Algiers Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism and the Plan of Action that was adopted in Algiers, Algeria, on 14 September 2002. I am pleased that this Convention has been ratified by sufficient African States and is due to enter into force on 6 December 2002. We believe that these efforts complement the determination of the United Nations as a collective to fight against terrorism.

In Africa, the common and most vivid terror committed against civilian populations is through the use of small arms. These small arms are on many occasions bartered in exchange for illicit drugs. We therefore have an interest in enhancing cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union in the fight against illicit trafficking in drugs, small arms and light weapons.

Globalization presents a special challenge to Africa, especially in relation to matters of trade. We look forward to the start of the Doha Development Round, especially as it shall address the improvement of market access for African products in order to promote sustainable growth in Africa.

The draft resolution urges the United Nations and its Member States to increase their support for Africa in its fight against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other related infectious diseases. Critical to these efforts is the need to address the plight of children who may be left orphans due to such communicable diseases. To this end, Member States are further called upon to implement the Plan of Action on a world fit for children.

Africa has further committed itself to improving human rights by adopting the Protocol Establishing an African Court of Human and Peoples' Rights. It is anticipated that the process towards establishing such a court will be finalized soon. Human rights will not be fully enjoyed in the continent as long as a large number of its people are refugees and internally displaced. In an attempt to complement Africa's efforts, the United Nations is called upon to support the African countries in efforts to incorporate problems of refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons into national and regional development plans.

Africa is establishing institutions that will enhance a culture of democracy, good governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law in an attempt to enhance popular participation in matters of governance. These structures — such as the Pan-African Parliament, the African Court of Justice, the Economic, Social and Cultural Council and the Financial Institutions — will strengthen and entrench democratic institutions and accountability in Africa. The draft resolution rightfully calls upon the United Nations system and invites the Bretton Woods institutions to assist as appropriate in the establishment of such institutions.

Finally, my delegation would like to propose a slight amendment to the fourth preambular paragraph of the draft resolution before us. We would like to correct the date on which the G8 summit at

Kananaskis, Canada, was held. The date "28 June 2002" should be replaced by "27 June 2002".

My delegation hopes that the General Assembly will adopt this draft resolution by acclamation.

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of Romania, who, in the course of his statement, will introduce draft resolution A/57/L.40.

Mr. Niculescu (Romania): It is a privilege for me to address the General Assembly on agenda item 22, "Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations", and, more specifically, on its sub-item (q) on cooperation between the United Nations and the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization.

I should like to commend the presentation made this morning by Mr. Wolfgang Hoffman, Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission, which to our mind illustrates the efficient work carried by the Commission in Vienna.

As a State party to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), Romania is fully committed to its early entry into force and implementation. In our view, a good relationship between the United Nations and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) is instrumental to building a more peaceful and secure world through disarmament and non-proliferation. From that perspective, we believe that reports delivered to the General Assembly on a regular basis by the Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission on the activities of the Organization are useful and welcome.

In its capacity as Chairman of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, the Romanian delegation has the honour and the pleasure to introduce to the Assembly for adoption the draft resolution contained in document A/57/L.40, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization". The draft resolution is based on the consultations held in Vienna and New York.

Like similar texts in the past, the draft resolution is basically a procedural one and is meant to serve as a basis for the CTBTO to inform the General Assembly on its activities at its fifty-ninth session. In its preambular part, the draft resolution takes note of both the note by the Secretary-General on the cooperation between the two organizations and the report of the Executive Secretary. In its operative paragraph, it decides to include in the provisional agenda of the fifty-ninth session the same sub-item.

In conclusion, I would like to express our hope that this draft resolution will be adopted by the General Assembly with the broadest support possible.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on Mr. Kanu Agabi, Attorney-General and Minister of Justice of Nigeria, who, in the course of his statement, will introduce draft resolution A/57/L.18.

Mr. Agabi (Nigeria): I take this opportunity as the current President of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO) to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization" (A/57/L.18). I will also speak briefly on behalf of my Government, the Federal Republic of Nigeria, on the activities of AALCO.

The role of AALCO in the field of international law as an intergovernmental organization comprising 45 countries from Asia and Africa is well known. Members will recall vividly the significant contributions AALCO has made in shaping the international legal regime relating to the law of the sea, the law of treaties and arbitration. There is virtually no field of international law that AALCO has not taken up at one time or another during the 46 years of its existence.

The organization's current programme includes several issues of great importance for our member States, which are discussed at our annual sessions, and at meetings and seminars. My Government, Nigeria, hosted the forty-first session of AALCO in Abuja in July this year. It was a session memorable not only for its high-level participation, but also for its in-depth consideration of issues such as human rights, the protection of migrant workers, trafficking in women and children, international terrorism, the environment, sustainable development, the establishment of the International Criminal Court, ongoing negotiations on the World Trade Organization and issues related to globalization.

The success recorded during that session was due to the cooperation of all the delegations that participated and of the AALCO secretariat. I am, therefore, pleased to extend the appreciation of the

Government of Nigeria to all the delegations that participated and that contributed to the success of that meeting. In particular, I wish to acknowledge the tireless efforts of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Wafik Kamil, and the secretariat.

Since the last time this item was considered by the General Assembly, our organization has accomplished a number of tasks. With a view to expanding our knowledge base, AALCO has signed cooperation agreements with the World Intellectual Property Organization, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations University and the International Organization for Migration.

Under the able leadership of our Secretary-General, Ambassador Kamil, issues relating to trafficking in women and children, migration, corruption and intellectual property rights, matters hitherto considered peripheral, have been accorded a place of priority and have received substantial focus within the work programme.

Given the transnational character of the globalization process, we are conscious of the fact that it will be increasingly difficult to deal with international law in isolation and divorced from the political and social realities that dictate the response of States to these issues. The historic, cultural and developmental differences among States have obviously to be taken into account in creating norms for a global society.

Globalization should not be confined to the opening of borders for the free passage of goods. In our thinking, borders must also be open for the passage of men and women whose motives are legitimate. Globalization must lead to the realization of the ideal of one humanity and one world without boundaries. It should mean that no nation should be a safe haven for the proceeds of corruption. It should mean that the proceeds of corruption should be surrendered to the nations that are the victims of corruption. It should mean that corrupt officials from Africa and Asia can be tried and punished wherever they take refuge. That will go a long way towards reducing crimes associated with money laundering, terrorism and corruption.

It is against that backdrop that AALCO, as a body of mostly developing and least developed countries, strives for a balanced, flexible and responsible approach to international law. The resolutions and studies of AALCO on the elimination of terrorism and its root causes, the responsibility of States to halt the emission of greenhouse gases and the use of trade as a tool for promoting environmental goals attest to this unique approach.

As regards technical assistance and capacity-building, AALCO plans to reinvigorate its training programme for officials of its member States under its Centre for Research and Training. It has also embarked upon a programme for dissemination of information on international law matters and proposes to publish an annual publication: the Asian-African Yearbook on International Law.

Time does not permit me to elaborate on the specific activities of AALCO. I would like to say that over the past 46 years, AALCO has provided a useful forum for exchanging views and for arriving at common positions on crucial issues of international law. It has great potential in meeting the new challenges posed in the context of the development of new rules and a new framework of international law in the twenty-first century. The comprehensive work programme on its agenda demonstrates member States' interest in further strengthening its activities. Its resolve to make concerted efforts together with the United Nations, its agencies and other intergovernmental organizations deserves full support.

With that objective in view, I would like to commend to the Assembly for adoption of the draft resolution contained in document A/57/L.18, on cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization.

The draft resolution very appropriately makes reference to the close cooperation between AALCO and United Nations agencies. The draft resolution also notes with appreciation AALCO's work aimed at aiding and facilitating the efforts of the United Nations on issues relating to combating corruption, eliminating international terrorism and human and drug trafficking, and the promotion of human rights.

In the light of the legal work undertaken by AALCO, it is necessary to promote close interaction between AALCO and the Sixth Committee of the General Assembly. By the unanimous agreement of AALCO and in order to reduce the problems that might arise, we have deleted paragraph 6 of the draft

resolution. The operative part of the draft resolution therefore reads as follows.

"[The General Assembly] [t]akes note with appreciation of the report of the Secretary-General;

"Notes with satisfaction the continuing efforts of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization towards strengthening the role of the United Nations and its various organs in enhancing the rule of law and wider adherence to related international instruments;

"Also notes with satisfaction the commendable progress achieved towards enhancing cooperation between the United Nations, its organizations, other international organizations and the Consultative Organization;

"Notes with appreciation the work of the Consultative Organization aiming at strengthening the efforts of the United Nations in respect of issues such as combating corruption, international terrorism and trafficking as well as drugs and human rights issues;

"Also notes with appreciation the initiative and efforts the Consultative Organization has undertaken to promote the objectives and principles set out in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, including wider acceptance of treaties deposited with the Secretary-General;

"Requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session a report on cooperation between the United Nations and the Consultative Organization;

"Decides to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-ninth session the item entitled 'Cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization'."

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.